



# Annual Report

A review of the 2023/24 season



## Feel the Buzz.

It's a buzz.

A different kinda buzz.

An exciting kinda buzz.

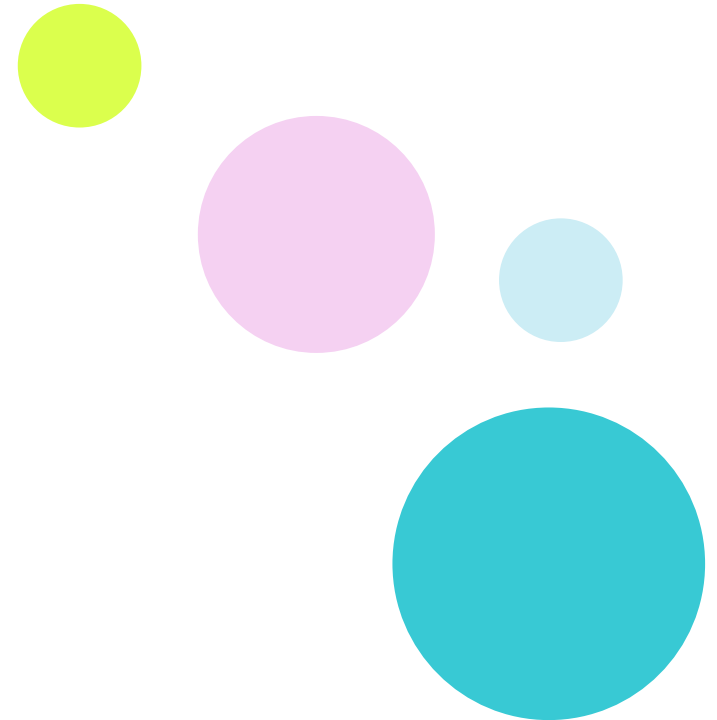
From the court on campus,  
To a beach near you.  
One net, one ball, game on.

All sorts, from all over.  
A melting pot of good people,  
And one shared language.  
Serve, pass, set, spike.

Big characters.  
Big moments.  
Bigger smiles.

There's nothing really like it.  
Bold, competitive, fun.  
And a welcome. For everyone.

Volleyball. Feel the buzz.



# Our Mission

We love Volleyball.

With passion, energy and enthusiasm, we support, promote & grow our sport and community in a sustainable way.

# Our Vision

To be recognised as a leader in inclusion, whilst becoming the fastest-growing Volleyball Federation in Europe.

Over the next four years we will:

- triple the number of players at all levels
- double the number of coaches & referees
- actively celebrate & promote our diversity



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This annual report covers the 2023/24 Season from June 1<sup>st</sup> 2023, to May 31<sup>st</sup> 2024. And incorporates audited accounts for the 2023 financial year.



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# Introduction

Foreword - Summary - Stakeholder Survey

**+56%**

Licensed coaches now above 150

**+50%**

League Entries from youth to adult

**+9**

Affiliated clubs, we're now at 62

**+24%**

Number of Referees

**884**

School teams in competitions

**+3**

Intl. Medals

**+24%**

Number of licensed players takes us over 2,600

**€1m**

Annual Turnover is up 33% to nearly €1million

**1**

Fantastic Cup Finals weekend taken to the next level

**+34%**

More players in Regional Dev. Centre programme



**+31%**

Social Media Followers

**27k**

In grants routed to member clubs

**83**

Number of nationalities in membership (+5)



**2023/24  
in Numbers**

**#PLAYVOLLEY**



## Foreword.

Usually, the *Presidents Address* for the annual report and AGM is about looking back on the past year. However, as I've prepared these notes, I find myself needing to make an exception this year as there is one thing that stands out in my mind that's about the future, not the past. It's the most important thing that will happen during my time as President.

I therefore urge you to forget (just for a few minutes) about the poor markings on the floor in the away hall you played in this season, the competition rule you're not happy with, or the referee that made a call you didn't agree with. Those things are important of course, but right now we have something big happening.

The Under 20 Women's European Championships are coming to Ireland! We need clubs, players and the entire Volleyball community to support this festival! It will easily be the biggest Volleyball event ever held in this country. And it will take a team effort from us all, to make it a success.

Our test events have gone well with the under 20 SCA Championship in January and Cup Finals in May, despite low attendances. But this event is a different level, it's huge, and we need everyone's support and loads more attendance!

Support can mean volunteering for a couple days, or it can be as simple as attending a match and sharing the news of the event in

your whatsapp groups, schools, workplace blogs, or on your social media. We need to tell the world!

Besides helping, you really don't want to miss it! The standard of play will be the best we've ever seen live on home soil.

We will have a range of specific opportunities for clubs, as well as individuals to get involved including:

- Coaching Courses – these will coincide with the tournament and give your coaches the chance to learn from the best, including our annual Women in Sport Conference.
- Ball Crew – your youth teams can get the best seat in the house! We'll be rewarding clubs that provide volunteers with official championship match balls.
- Referee training – they'll be opportunities to learn from the very best in Europe.
- Kids Coaching – we'll be building in skill clinics for youngsters...play some volleyball, watch some elite players.
- Club nights – we'll have special ticket rates for club groups to get together during the Summer.
- Volunteer – our volunteer registration will open next week, please help out and be part of an amazing event.

We are very much a multi-cultural community, and this tournament presents a chance to celebrate that, and our members that may come from Poland, Ukraine, Italy, Czechia, Portugal, Finland, Serbia and of course, Ireland. It also presents a chance to entice people from those countries that live in Ireland to join our community and re-ignite their love for Volleyball.



Ultimately, this event is a huge effort and investment, but with everyone's help we can and will capitalise on our efforts and reap the rewards both on and off the court in the coming years. Please don't assume someone else is going to help support. I ask in this address that every member of our community does something, no matter how big or small it is for the event. What an opportunity we have, let's not waste it!

And what an occasion for our young players. I would do anything to be able to turn back the clock and represent our country this August.

In closing, my final message is to Graham, Laura and the rest of the players: I know you'll do us proud! Wear that shirt with pride. As Mary Lalor told teams of the past, *'Don't worry about the score, it's about performance. If you're happy you've performed at your best, then that's all you or anyone else can ask of you!'*

We know you'll give it your all.

I can't wait to see you all in August.

Clodagh | President.



# Volleyball u20 European Championship 2024

05-13 August  
Sport Ireland Campus,  
Dublin





## Chief Executive's Summary.

There are a lot of numbers in this report. A lot. Hard targets bring accountability, which in turn drives performance and a culture of continuous improvement.

Some of the big numbers include:

- 56% increase in number of licensed coaches v. 2022
- 24% increase in number of licensed players
- 33% increase in revenues
- 24% increase in number of licensed players
- 50% increase in league entries
- 3 international medals

It's been another year of significant growth.

Whilst the numbers are pretty impressive, we have to remember it isn't all about the figures. Wayne Goldsmith, the famous swimming coach says that the most important KPI, is to *keep people inspired*.

When I reflect on the last 12 months, the thing I'm most proud of is how the whole community is inspiring people into Volleyball, or within Volleyball. That includes bringing world class coach educators like Marco Mencarelli and Manu Benelli, or Olympic referees like Daniele Rapisarda. Or giving young players the chance to experience Club Italia, or go a club trip to Portugal or Poland.

It's all the new social volleyball sessions that have sprung up in Cork, or the work with the Leinster Special Schools. It's having International referees officiate at European Championships. It's giving school-teachers the chance to go to the CEV coaches convention in Bulgaria,

and network with their peers from Greenland, North Macedonia and Italy.

It's live streaming the u16 Girls D Division school final and make those players feel like an Olympian on 'TV', and then producing top class content for them to re-live it.

It's our national teams starting to bring home medals – those successes give everyone energy.

The reason we elevated the Cup Finals Weekend to a new level, was to have that inspiration-factor for our school players through to our top athletes.

It was an incredible feeling seeing the faces of those 16-year-olds in the schools final when they first walked into the Indoor Arena, and then their eyes when they saw their name flash in lights on the courtside LED. In fact, it wasn't just the kids, for sure the most excited were the veterans in the Legends Match.

That's what it's all about. And it's happening daily within our clubs – the more we inspire, the more the sport will grow.

This report follows the same structure as our strategic plan, *Feel the Buzz*, with a specific report dedicated to the people within our community.

I hope you enjoy reading the progress we're making together.

Gary

Gary Stewart | Chief Executive

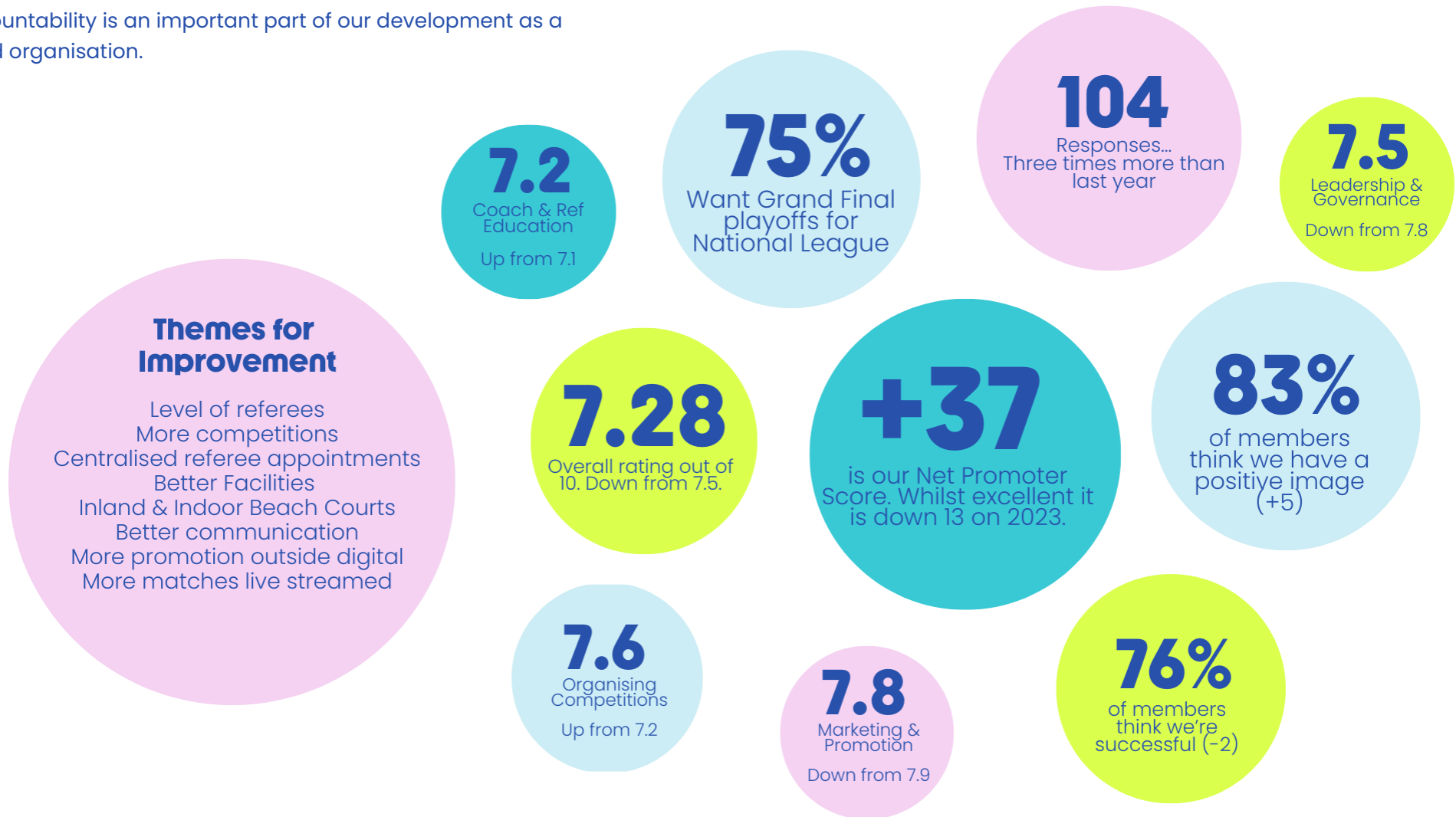




# Stakeholder Survey Summary.

Now in its sixth year the annual stakeholder survey gives members an opportunity to objectively score Volleyball Ireland’s performance and make suggestions for future improvement.

This accountability is an important part of our development as a sport and organisation.



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# Strategy

KPI Scorecard - Top 10 Deliverables - Growth





## Strategy Report.

Our new strategic plan was launched in 2023 and focuses on growing a sustainable Volleyball community, with a vision *to be recognised as a leader in inclusion, and the fastest-growing Volleyball Federation in Europe.*

Over the next four years we will;

- triple the number of players at all levels of our game
- double the number of active coaches & referees
- actively celebrate & promote our diversity

The highly detailed and comprehensive strategy includes 58 key results and well over 100 actions that will support, promote and grow the diverse Volleyball community in Ireland. As well as 10 key performance indicators that will measure Volleyball’s success including the tripling of participation.

This section provides a summary update on our key performance indicators, top ten deliverables and key results.

[Read the strategy in full here.](#)



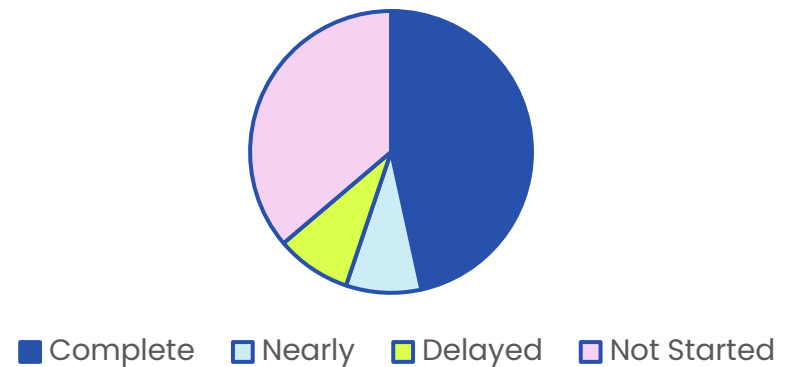
In terms of the 58 key results, we have so far achieved 47% (as of Dec 31<sup>st</sup> 2023), including a relocation to the Sport Ireland Campus, the creation of a Youth Council and the development of a partnership with a major Federation (Italy).

Some key results such as the number of licensed coaches (150) will be reviewed and increased, due to excellent performance after significant investment in Coach Education.

36% of projects to achieve key results haven’t yet started and are prioritised for 2025–2026. These include centralised referee appointments and the employment of a Beach Volleyball development officer.

In terms of challenges, 9% of Key Results are behind schedule this includes the number of social media followers (30,000) which will require extensive work and more creative engagement campaigns to reach that ambitious milestone.

### Key Results Status Tracker x58





## KPI Scorecard 2023.

Feel the Buzz has established 10 inter-linked **Key Performance Indicators** that are measured monthly with annual targets.

KPI	2026 Target	Dec 2022	Dec 2023 Target	Dec 2023 Actual	% Increase versus 2022	As of May 2024
Licensed Players (incl. U18)	5000	1637	2400	2161	32%	2,607
U18 Players	2000	593	850	864	46%	894
Affiliated Clubs	64	50	52	54	4%	62
Clubs with Youth Sections	30	17	19	23	26%	23
Licensed Coaches	150	83	110	133	60%	153
Licensed Referees	150	92	110	99	7%	110
School Team Entries	1250	700	800	827	18%	863
Annual Revenues	1mil	753k	850k	994k	32%	n/a
Social Media Followers	30,000	11,101	15,000	14,756	28%	15,611

**2023 Target Achieved | Delayed | Off Track |**



## Top 10 Deliverables.

Our plan features 58 key results that will help grow our sport, contributing to our overarching KPIs. From those 58 key results, we've identified 10 significant deliverables that will have a major and lasting impact on the sport, ensuring the buzz for Volleyball is maintained throughout the next four years...and here is a quick update on progress so far.

Deliverable	Status	Update May 31 <sup>st</sup> 2024
Host a major International Volleyball Event	Off Track	European Championships agreed for Aug 2024. Planning well underway.
Host a major International Beach Volleyball Event	Off Track	Dependant on in-land facilities this could be delivered in 2026.
Implement a new Coach Education framework and syllabus, aligning with global best practice	Off Track	Framework and syllabus review ongoing and making progress. New foundation courses delivered.
Develop at least 50 outdoor Volleyball Courts on beaches and in parks across the community	Off Track	On track for completion and boosted by the Government's new <b>Participation Nation</b> outdoor sports equipment scheme.
Implement a Referee centralisation system for the National League	Off Track	Timelines to be determined in consultation with clubs. Ongoing recruitment and retention of referees in new pathway is vital.
All National League clubs have youth sections	Off Track	This aspirational aim is making good progress. Clubs are delivering.
Sign up to the UN Sports for Climate Action Framework with a commitment to reduce carbon emissions in half by 2030	Achieved	Sign up complete. The first Irish Sports NGB to do so, and first Volleyball Federation in the world.
Relocate Volleyball Ireland HQ to the Sport Ireland Campus	Achieved	Complete. Moved into new office in Q4 2023.
Win a Small Countries Association Championship Gold Medal	Off Track	Progress being made with 3 of 4 teams winning medals this season. Change to programme with no u20 has made task harder.
Every affiliated Volleyball club has representation on a Volleyball Ireland Board or Committee.	Off Track	New Commission recruitment and induction system will aid this aspiration.

Achieved | On Track | Off Track |



# Membership Growth & Profile.

Volleyball Ireland has undergone a period of rapid growth with a significant increase in the number of players active within the game. This is largely due to successful participation programmes and social volley promotion, but also directly linked to an expansion of competition opportunities through the Youth League as well as the introduction of the Development League.

Licensed Players Trend



The total number of licensed players (end of May 2023) now stands at 2,607 which is more than three times 2017/18 stats. It’s a 24% increase in one season.

70% of players licensed to Volleyball Ireland are female, which is a big rise on last year (60%). This is largely due to the growth of targeted social volley initiatives and women in sport funding.

Incidentally, the work to recruit social players into the sport continues to excel. There are now almost as many ‘non-league’ adults registered as players that compete in the National League. Recently, around 50% of players were ‘non-league’.

The number of coaches has boomed from 98 to 153 (+56%) largely driven by significant investment in courses, and heightened demand from young players.

The number of referees has risen 24% due to the hard work of the Referees Management Committee delivering courses nationwide.

Volleyball is a ‘young’ sport with an average licensed player age of 25.7 which has dropped slightly from 26. The average age of Coaches has dropped by 3 years to 40, and referees remain the same at 37.

The number of players born in Ireland has increased by 81 to 932. This is mainly due to expansion of the youth leagues and development league, targeting younger players. The main focus of our last strategic plan *Raising the Game* was youth development, and this continues to grow with 894 x u18s now having a license versus 540 just two years ago.

The number of foreign-born players continues to grow, with players now originating from 83 different countries (v. 67 in 2022 and 63 in



2020). The new social volley license has proved popular with foreign nationals; 89% of social volley licenses are purchased by players born outside of Ireland, versus 56% of licenses for National Leagues (Adult & Youth). Associate clubs like Social Volley Dublin are attracting significant numbers who wish to enjoy more relaxed volleyball. Volleyball remains one of the most culturally diverse sports in Ireland.

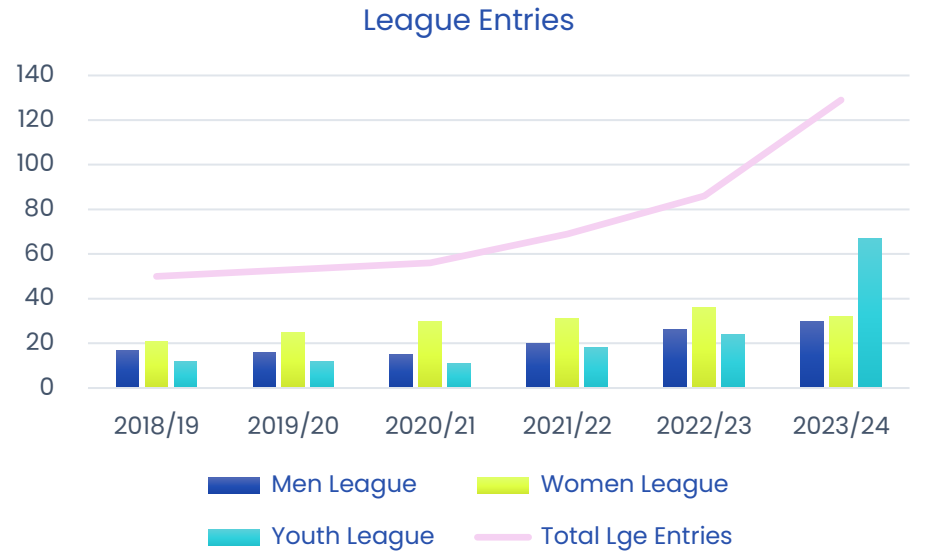
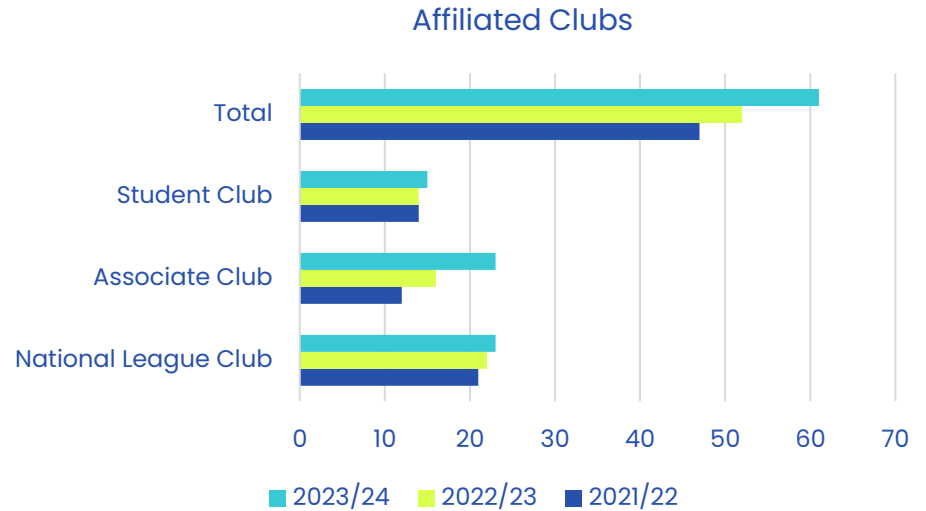
An increase in the number of clubs affiliating is naturally driving this growth, with 23 associate clubs purchasing a club license in 2023/24 – up 50% on last year. Many of these clubs, such as Mayo VC, are focussing on youth development.

We have 61 affiliated clubs including 14 Student Sport Affiliates and 23 National League clubs.

Growth of our league competitions was accelerated for the 2023/24 league season. Including the Youth & Development League competitions, team participation increased from 86 to 129 teams which is a 50% rise.

Regionalising the Development Leagues and Division 2 of the National League has removed one of the main barriers to participation at this level, travel. Consideration must be given to how we structure the league competitions going forward, to ensure players and compete at an appropriate level.

Whilst growth is the game, we need to be conscious of managing this sustainably with an appropriate number and level of referees and coaches available to support the sport.



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# Activities

Activities report highlighting our key results and initiatives delivered this season



## School Aged Children.

**Overall Strategic Objective** *We will embed the principles of Long-Term Player Development in all of our Youth competitions and programmes, growing participation, improving retention and ensuring that fun, exciting and age-appropriate activities are being delivered in schools and clubs.*

### Key Results 2023/24

- 43% rise in U16 and Development League team entries
- 3 new southern regional leagues established to cater for demand.
- Increase to 884 school volleyball team entries.
- 456 (4v4) development games conducted across 11 events.

### Review

The VLY. Youth & Development Leagues witnessed large scale changes for 2023-24. U16 Girls and Development Men leagues expanded to add a southern division providing opportunities for new teams from Kerry, Cork and the surrounding areas. A highlight growth statistic was Development Women entries up by 75% and U16 boys by 60%. Both U16 and Development Leagues featured for the first time at VLY Cup Finals Weekend thus elevating the overall experience for teams competing at these levels.

Volleyball Ireland's Youth Council has undergone a busy year. The council has added two new members in Samuel Tavares & Alessandro Sbarbaro. Volleyball Ireland thank Beth Clark and Wojtech Lada for their time on the council as they now step back. Over the last 12

months, the Youth Council has been instrumental for Volleyball Ireland's insight and understanding on youth related topics. This season, VLY have been able to seek recommendations on Transgender and Nonbinary players in sport, university volleyball selection panels as well as league formatting for Indoor and beach.

Another successful year of school volleyball has opened the door for additional school equipment support from the CEV. After a record increasing of entries by 109% last season we have added a further 107 teams this year, bringing the total to 884 teams in 23-24. This many teams enabled 2,028 matches throughout the short academic year - **that's twelve games per day for every single school day of the year.**

Our introductory game of 4v4 volleyball was rolled out in 11 locations this season. A total of 456 matches were coordinated with the fundamental goals of developing skills through fun small-sided games. Over the last 12 months, VLY. has been a partner of the CEV through working groups to roll out a new younger intro game. This new concept will focus on 6-10 year olds, and aligning with our vision to on board the even younger players to our sport and clubs.

The Junior Beach Tour hosted an exciting new format in 2023. Kick starting the summer was a Beach Weekender in three provinces inviting all youths to come and play. The weekender was followed up with a JR Coastal tour in Cork, Galway and Meath catering for the more competitive players at two different age grouping. Grand finals brought the summer to a close and helped to raise the profile of the tour with champions from each tour competing for the ultimate prize.



The Jr. beach scene has been catching fever within schools and sold-out events in Inchydoney, Dangan and Bettystown are fast becoming the hottest ticket in school volleyball competitions. The adapted 4v4 version allows an introduction for students to learn the discipline in a less demanding way. A fourth location is likely to emerge next season as demand is high.

#### Some priorities for 2024

- Expand the Youth League to include u18 players to enable children to compete at a high level against their peers, for longer.
- Encourage and support all existing National League clubs to establish Junior sections.
- Work with the National League Management Committee to restructure the development leagues (Division 3) to combat issues of playing down divisions, and to ensure a more cohesive link between youth leagues and adult national leagues.





## Talent Pathway.

**Overall Strategic Objective** *We will develop clear and ambitious player pathway in both formats of the game to improve our on court performance, and give young players the best chance of reaching their potential.*

### Key Results 2023/24

- The number of players in the Regional Development Centre programme increased from 56 to 75.
- Overnight camp developed in partnership with Trinity Sport.

### Review

Recruiting for volunteer coaches at the start of the programme was a challenge. Coupled with the resignation of the previous pathways manager, and the delayed recruitment of the FIVB funded Head Youth Coach, it was a slow start to the programme.

Despite start up issues, the RDC programme got moving quickly with a new approach of “as many as possible, as good as possible, as fast as possible.” Widening the net at a younger age gives the pathway more opportunity to find players with long term national team potential.

Due to increased interest, the West Boys Development Centre was re-established with 22 athletes now taking part.

Both regional centres came together in January for a joint training session and to then watch the U20 Men’s SCA at the National Indoor Arena.

To aid player development, tactical homework was given to all the athletes regarding player and team scouting at the event.

This year’s RDC focussed more on individual skill development, rather than team dynamics and tactics. The coaching focussed on the fundamentals of the sport.

An end of season camp delivered in partnership with Trinity College Sport will wrap up the indoor season, as the new Beach Development Centre programme launches in Dublin and Galway.



## Third Level & Colleges.

**Overall Strategic Objective** We will recognise and emphasise the role of Universities and Colleges in our mission to grow the sport, putting exciting participation & performance programmes in place, to get more people involved in the sport as players, coaches, referees and leaders.

### Key Results 2023/24

- 14 volleyball energisers registered for new look programme.
- Mixed University League in development phase
- Irish University Scholarship Booklet created.
- Coach & Referee courses to suit student calendars

### Review

We expanded our support of Student Sport Ireland competitions to include an enhanced live stream production for the SSI Championship, with finals held at the new TUD Tallaght Campus, which saw victories for NUI Galway Men and Trinity College Women – both teams featured Irish Internationals.

There has been a clear improvement in the quality of play within the SSI leagues this season.

A new look Volleyball Energises programme was launched in October for new and existing DIVAs to continue their good work in developing participation levels. This year the programme was opened to not only females (previously funded through women in sport fund) but all applicants. Energises are offered volleyball training, coach attire for sessions as well as balls for delivering.

One of the most active Energisers is Samuel Tavares. Samuel has now joined the VLY Youth Council as well as the VLY Staff Team on a summer internship. Welcome Samuel!

Volleyball Ireland, Student Sport Ireland and club captains are working towards on an action plan that will see the emergence of a new mixed volleyball student championships. An appetite for mixed volleyball as always been within the sport and a key strength of our game over some others. Surveys have gone to all colleges and work will continue throughout summer with the view to launching in 2024-2025.

A sport scholarship booklet created by VLY. for students and parents will aim to increase knowledge and understanding of the scholarship programmes available here in Ireland. Up to date successful applicant's stories and tips will accompany college sites and deadline dates to avoid any missed opportunities.

Volleyball Ireland will become more proactive in engaging the affiliated colleges and university teams to deliver referee and coach education courses at times that suit the academic calendars. These courses will enable a smoother transition for coaches and referees to the national leagues.



# National League.

**Overall Strategic Objective** *We will enhance our National League growing participation and raising standards off court and on. End of season events and finals will showcase the best of our sport.*

## Key Results 2023/24

- The number of adult National League teams increased from 51 to 62 in 2023/24
- Electronic scoring was introduced in 2023/24 and will be made mandatory from 2024/25 season
- Centralised referee appointments remain a work in progress in this area

## Review

62 teams took part in the 2023-24 National League, with a record 463 matches scheduled in League and Cup competitions.

The E-Scoring platform was launched in November, with a total of 85 matches scored with that method by season’s end (33%). Our thanks to Genius Sport for providing support to set up the competitions and for the online training delivered to 110 Secretaries, Scorekeepers and Referees from our Clubs. This contributed to a noticeable improvement in result reporting times, with clubs not needing to screengrab and WhatsApp results into the office for matches scored online. The majority of local challenges at venues were overcome.

Referee appointments continued to be a challenge at various levels of competition, and we remain some way from being able to centralise

the appointment process, which is a key demand from members. Clubs are encouraged to constantly review their own referee resources, to ensure they can meet the needs of their own teams’, particularly as teams move up the divisions.

A new Code of Conduct was introduced prior to the start of the season and both the number of cards and disciplinary points remained similar to the previous season, despite 75 more games being played.

National League Discipline	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22
Matches Played	444	369	262
Red Cards	18	21	19
Yellow Cards	88	82	53
Yellow & Red Expulsion		1	
Total Cards	106	104	72
Matches per card	4.19	3.55	3.63

The NLMC continued to monitor and apply competition rules consistently throughout the season. The main issues to arise were Clubs and players not following the transfer rules, and the lack of planning around confirming fixtures. The rules are necessarily lengthy, but also uniformly applied, and Clubs are encouraged to be familiar with the contents prior to the start of each season. With this in mind, a rules induction for club secretaries will be delivered in pre-season to support secretaries in their work.



## Beach Tour.

**Overall Strategic Objective** *We will enhance our National Beach Tour growing participation and raising standards off court and on. Vibrant Beach Tour events will be attractive to players, spectators and sponsors.*

### Key Results 2023/24

- There were only 103 licenced players in 2023 season, but only 5 events eventuated during the summer, due to poor weather.
- The establishment of Beach Volleyball Clubs is a work in progress, with none established so far.
- A new team event worked well with positive feedback.
- Agreement reached to develop inland courts at the Sport Ireland Campus.
- Challenger Series piloted.

### Review

The 2023 Beach season was decimated by weather and, despite a mid-season rearrangement of the playing calendar, only 4 Beach Tour events were played. As a result, only 103 players took part in the Tour in 2023.

In addition, a Club Championship competition was run, but the concept of beach volleyball “clubs” is in its infancy, and we have work to do in this area.

The Challenger Series was also launched in 2023, and involved informal matches being played between teams outside of official weekend Beach Tour Events. Results from Challenger matches can count towards Beach Tour Rankings after a minimum threshold of matches, and a number of players benefitted from this playing option.

The 2023 season demonstrated just how much the Beach Tour is currently a hostage to coastal weather patterns and a more unpredictable climate. The need for a dedicated inland facility is now becoming more important, both as a regular Beach Tour venue and a contingency for Events that may be weather affected.

Feedback from players highlighted the need for matches against more teams and, following a think tank meeting, a single format for men and women will be played in 2024. Running separate 1\* and 2\* events brings a number of diseconomies of scale, when simplicity is the key to a successful event.

**An agreement has been reached to develop an inland court facility at the Sport Ireland Campus, with two temporary courts, followed by three permanent courts to be opened this year.**





## National Teams.

**Overall Strategic Objective** *We will better support and develop our national team performance programmes with increased investment and innovative partnerships to enhance our playing level.*

### Key Results 2023/24

- Medals secured in 3 out of 4 Small Countries Association championships
- Partnership renewed with Italian Volleyball Federation
- Teams compete in age group Euro Beach Volley
- 4<sup>th</sup> place finish in SCA Snr. Beach Championships
- Participation in u22 Women European Championship qualifiers
- Head Youth Coach appointed through FIVB funding

### Review

The 2023/24 international season has been progressive with Ireland taking a silver medal (u18W) and bronze medals (u20M and Snr. Women) at four Small Countries Association championships.

The under 20 men defeated Gibraltar and Northern Ireland on home soil to take third place, whilst the under 18 women overcame Northern Ireland and Scotland to win silver in Malta.

The Senior women won a thrilling 5-set match with Northern Ireland in San Marino, after defeats to the hosts and a close contest with Scotland.

A youthful Senior men lost 4/4 in Liechtenstein but were competitive in most matches, showing significant improvement versus the 2023 Small Countries Association event.

Ireland's gold medal winning potential was hamstrung slightly by the change in age-group from SCA u20 Women to u18s. Graham Bell's team are now in full preparation mode for the u20 European Championships, after strong wins against Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Preparation for competition was enhanced this season with all teams competing in challenge matches and camps abroad, including:

- Celtic Challenge in Glasgow for u20 and Senior Men and Women
- B\_Smart Cup in Liechtenstein for Senior Men and u20 Women
- VLY. Live challenge matches for u20 Men & Women v. Scotland
- St. Patrick's Challenge with Northern Ireland for all teams
- Club Italia camp for the u20 Women in Milan
- Bucharest camp and friendly matches for Senior Men & u22
- Manu Benelli Performance Camp for u18 Women

We employed our first full-time Youth Coach Graham Bell, whose salary is supported by FIVB. Graham has been working across the player pathway from clubs and schools, through to national teams.

On the Beach we had representation at u20 and u20 EuroBeach Volley for the first time, whilst five teams competed in the SCA Championships. Lara McNichols and Fiona Lamont finished best in fourth place out of 14.

Liam Corcoran and Ciagan Davoren have made the main draw for the u22 EuroBeach Volley in Turkey, from June 6-10<sup>th</sup>.



## Participation & Social Players.

**Overall Strategic Objective** We will ensure that Volleyball is accessible, inclusive, and welcoming. We will have exciting participation opportunities in clubs and community settings through an expansion of recreational competitions and social programmes. We want lifelong participation in the sport. We will attract new players and retain existing ones by our progressive promotion of diversity, inclusion & equality.

### Key Results 2023/24

- 852 registered social and nonleague players licenced
- Growth from 15 to 23 associate clubs in one year
- New recreational blitzes added in Donegal, Clare and Cork
- Free-to-use courts opened in Cork (park) and Balbriggan (beach)

### Review

An expansion of social opportunities and programmes has led to a further increase of non-league and social player licenses. Ukrainian projects, new development leagues and LSP partnerships have largely been the driving force behind player recruitment in this area, which is often the entry point to Volleyball for adults. Growth is such that now the number of non-league players equates to the number of National League players.

County Cork has seen the significant growth, and with the introduction of new southern regional leagues this season has enabled 8 associate

clubs to sign up and compete against National League clubs. A partnership with Cork City Council on 'Play in the Park' and the 'West Cork Project' targeting Skibbereen, Bandon, Kinsale, Bantry, and Dunmanway will aim to double the number of associates within the county for next season.

The outdoor volleyball posts initiative has continued to provide safe spaces for communities to engage and enjoy volleyball. 20 systems have been allocated to councils and LSP's around Ireland over the few years. The demand has never been so high and therefore VLY. is exploring new funding opportunities to ensure every county in Ireland has access to these courts.

Interest in mixed Volley blitzes has been moving in line with the increase of associate clubs and players. Fully booked events in Cork and Dublin for multiple levels of players were successfully delivered in early 2024. Donegal, Cork County and Clare also delivered events to help satisfy demand.

Park and beach volley mixed events are currently being established with the view to engaging the members over the summer months in Leinster, Connacht, and Munster locations.



## People with a Disability.

**Overall Strategic Objective** *We ensure that volleyball is accessible, inclusive and welcoming, adapting game formats and creating new ones to ensure that everyone can enjoy our sport.*

### Key Results 2023/24

- Blitz events for over 120 children with additional needs.
- Strengthened core partnerships with Irish Wheelchair Association, Irish Special Schools Sport Council and Local Sports Partnerships

### Review

Since September VLY. have run 4 separate courses for persons with disabilities.

At the Irish Wheelchair Association in Clontarf, two separate sessions were coordinated during midterm breaks with a modified and adapted game play enabling participation for all.

In three other events designed for children with mild intellectual disabilities (Waterford, Galway and Dublin) a total of 123 participants took part in a 2-hour skill development and fun games session. The events were assisted by trained Transition Year students from local schools. (Ardscoil Mhuire, Dungarvan College and Sutton Park School). VLY will also be present throughout the summer at LSP events in Kildare, Meath and Cork as we build new bridges and move into new locations providing more opportunities.

In July & August, we are establishing our first beach volleyball opportunity for children with additional needs. Two summer camps in Navan followed up with an open beach volleyball session in July at Bettystown will act as the building blocks for growth as we aim to raise awareness and increase interest.

VLY. are in the process of organising a "Train the Trainer" day with Waterford LSP. Train the Trainer is a pilot programme that will aim to be rolled out nationwide to enable more ongoing Chair and Sitting volleyball on a local level.

VLY. will bring Sports Inclusion and Disability Awareness training to VLY. LIVE 3.0. The workshop will be available for all members in attendance and equip them with the necessary skills to ensure their club, is a club for all.





## Coaches & Teachers.

**Overall Strategic Objective** *A new Coach Education Framework and syllabus will provide modern and appropriate supports for Coaches and Teachers at all levels of the game, incorporating up-to-date coaching methods and in line with the internationally accepted Long Term Player Development (LTPD) best practice.*

### Key Results 2023/24

- Number of licensed coaches increased 56% to 153.
- 150% increase in coach educational courses at schools and colleges
- VLY Live 2.0 & first ever Women In Sport Conference delivered.

### Review

An increase in licensed coaches from 98 last season to 153 equates to a significant achievement. This positive trend is the result of increased investment into Coach Education. 72 coaches attended the five-core coaching courses hosted between July 2023 and January 2024.

Our largest growth statistic in schools is related to education delivered. Coach and referee courses increased from 16 to 42 this academic year due to the addition of a part-time staff member. The number of potential future coaches and referees educated more than doubled from 372 to 753 within the academic year.

In October we had the much-anticipated return of VLY. LIVE. An event that is designed for the whole volleyball community, gathered expert guest speakers such as world-famous youth coach Marco Mencarelli,

Ally Jack, Hannah Thornton, Maja Ban, and Olympic Games referee Daniele Rapisarda.

Plans are underway for the third edition in late September 2024. A first ever Women in Sport Conference was successfully delivered in 2024. Plans for a return of the conference in August alongside the U20 Women's European Championship Finals are in early planning stages.

VLY. continued to develop their partnerships in 2024-25 that helped to support the development of our members. Over the last 12 months we hosted international stars and FIVB tutors such as Lubo Ganev, Manu Benelli, Megan Burgdorf and Bogdan Tanase for a series of workshops. This is on top of sending coaches to Club Italia and the CEV coaches convention in Bulgaria.

The Future Leaders programme is in the final stages of development and will launch summer 2024. Handpicked members of each VLY. youth club will undergo coaching, refereeing and statistic training in a three-day course that will seek to provide a greater knowledge and understanding of the game at an earlier age, this initiative will support clubs develop young coaches and referees.

Head Youth Coach Graham Bell has been active in the community since his appointment in the Autumn, delivering a number of workshops that combine coach education and player development.



## Referees & Officials.

**Overall Strategic Objective** *We will invest in our Referees and Officials, developing training and support resources that inspires more Referees to take up the whistle. We will keep existing Referees active for longer and progressing through a pathway, in both formats of the game.*

### Key Results 2023/24

- 24% increase of registered referees from 2023 season
- Nationwide Grade 3 courses for 62 new referees
- 11 upgrades conducted
- New referee pathway framework developed
- E-scoring technology introduced to clubs
- 160 students completed the full day referee course
- Giordano Dos Santos selected for European Championship finals
- Aurelien Gimenez to officiate at u20 Beach EuroVolley

### Review

Whilst the number of referees is increasing (24% up), the speed of growth compared to team entries isn't fast enough.

Grade 3 Referee courses were delivered in Galway, Cork and Dublin x2 to assist clubs developing new referees. There has been quite a noticeable take up from the previous season as we increased from 39 to 62 referees trained year to year.

The number of referees progressing along the pathway via assessments also improved. A total of 11 assessments were

conducted. 6 Grade 2s, 3 X Grade 1's and 2 x Nationals ensured the quality of refereeing within Irish leagues is continually rising.

The Referees Management Committee met in Q1 2024 to establish a referee pathway that is clear and supportive for all referees to excel in. The new pathway includes a basic level of education for referees involved in Youth and Development leagues as well as continuous professional development steps for all National League referees. The release of the new pathway along with an information session will be forthcoming during the summer, after consultation with member clubs.

E-scoring made a successful introduction this season 2023. Top of the class clubs for usage this year were Galway VC, Ballymun Patriots and Munster Thunder. Looking ahead to next season, E-scoring will move to mandatory for all clubs in the National League. It has proven to be a positive resource for attracting younger scorers, compared with paper scoresheets.

Education remains a top priority. Providing knowledge to the youth through college and school programmes will ensure more awareness and understanding of volleyball in years to come. Similar to coaching the referee courses received serious interest. In just one year we almost tripled the number of courses delivered within the education sector from 4 to 11.

International Volleyball and Beach Referees Giordano Dos Santos and Aurelien Gimenez have been selected by CEV to officiate at European Championship finals this Summer – a pivotal moment for the referee pathway.



## Club Leaders & Volunteers.

**Overall Strategic Objective** *We will increase our efforts to provide support and incentives to help grow clubs and support their volunteers, especially those with youth sections and/or an inclusive ethos.*

### Key Results 2023/24

- €27,000 of equipment distributed to member clubs through the net and posts replacement scheme
- €20,000 in youth development funding secured for 10 clubs
- New club development programme developed

### Review

With the employment of regionalised part time development officers, the number of clubs supported into activity has grown, particularly at associate club level where we now have 23 clubs. This number will continue to grow as entry-level social volleyball programmes and recreational tournaments expand.

The introduction of more youth leagues and the development league means that clubs now have a clear pathway.

The cost of equipment continues to be a barrier for many clubs, which is why the Net & post replacement scheme is renewed for 2024 with a further 20k of funding secured for 2024. This is in addition to the 27k of equipment support distributed to clubs in 2023.

We were delighted to support 11 Clubs- Impact, Galway, Dynamite, Santry, Ballymun, Dalkey, Balbriggan, Kildare, Tallaght, Carrick Crows and DVC receive Sports Capital equipment grants, totalling over 20k. These equipment grants are specifically designed to enhance and develop youth projects ahead of the 2024-25 season.

An additional 20k in funding has been secured to help Youth Clubs develop outdoor participation. The pack includes essential equipment to help meet the needs of the ever-growing memberships as well as coaching sessions to adjust tactics and skills for the outdoor game.

From a club administration perspective we extended the number of Safeguarding courses to five in 2023-24. This helped cater for the 67 participants needing training and certification to ensure they could volunteer within their clubs.

Looking ahead to the new season we have teamed up with Geoff Wilson Consulting to provide a development planning and club management course for club volunteers. The programme will focus on off court work such as development planning, branding, digital communication, governance, and marketing. There will also be a technical coaching element included. This programme is fully subsidised by Volleyball Ireland with the aim to improve volunteer capacity within our clubs.



## Major Events.

**Overall Strategic Objective** *Host major International events and enhance the delivery of domestic Cup finals, putting Volleyball firmly on the Irish sporting map.*

### Key Results 2023/24

- Hosted two international volleyball competition events in 2023/24, both at the Sport Ireland National Indoor Arena.
- Host the end of season Cup Finals Weekend at the same venue, but with the new Gerfloor flooring system in place, which transformed the look and feel of the event.
- Introduced ticket scanning and accreditation systems to our events, to better monitor spectator numbers and better manage court access.
- Introduced the use of water tanks to cut down on plastic waste at our events

### Review

Over the last 12 months, Volleyball Ireland have hosted three major events – the SCA Men’s U20 European Qualifier, the St Patrick’s Challenge and the end of season Finals Weekend, with over 850 supporters having attended over those six days.

All of these events have served as useful test events for our upcoming hosting of the CEV Women’s U20 European Championships, in August.

We have benefitted from a very enthusiastic cohort of volunteers to help manage the customer-facing areas around the arena and we couldn’t have laid on these events without the co-operation of the competing teams – all of whom worked with us for the common good.

In terms of hosting an international Beach Volleyball Tournament – our unpredictable climate continues to frustrate such efforts – but the development of an inland facility may smooth over some of the issues that may arise in hosting a tournament by the coast.

We have also organised other non-tournament events over the previous 12 months, including our Awards Dinner – attended by over 250 from the volleyball community – and our second annual VLY Live weekend. The latter benefitted from Marco Mencarelli and Daniele Rapisarda sharing their time and experiences to help upskill all stakeholders within the Irish game.

Major events benefit the whole of the sport, promoting the game and giving opportunities to raise the standards of our operation.

Planning for the u20 Women’s European Championships in August is well underway. Financially, it is the biggest project we’ve ever delivered with a budget of over €400,000.

We are grateful for the support of the Dutch Federation (Nevobo) and their team of event experts who are sharing vast knowledge with our team.



## Marketing & Promotion.

**Overall Strategic Objective** *We will connect and engage people with and within our sport, showcasing and promoting the brilliance of our game to new audiences, to grow participation and raise our profile. We will champion the great people stories that make our community unique.*

### Key Results 2023/24

- 31% increase in social media followers
- 3,869 Monster Block subscribers, up over 110%
- Watch time on YouTube +76%
- YouTube unique viewers +3,308 (+29%)

### Review

A key part of our purpose is to promote our sport. With limited financial resources, and the fact that large numbers of our core target market live online, much of our focus is on social media and digital channels.

Social media channel followers have grown by 30% or 3,786 followers, which follows a regular trend since 2021.

The biggest increase has been on TikTok, which isn't necessarily related to the content we are producing, but a reflection of general societal trends.

Most success has been found on YouTube with growth of 46% in subscribers – this is largely to do with the hosting of the u20 SCA Men's Championships in January, and the VLY. Cup Finals weekend. The

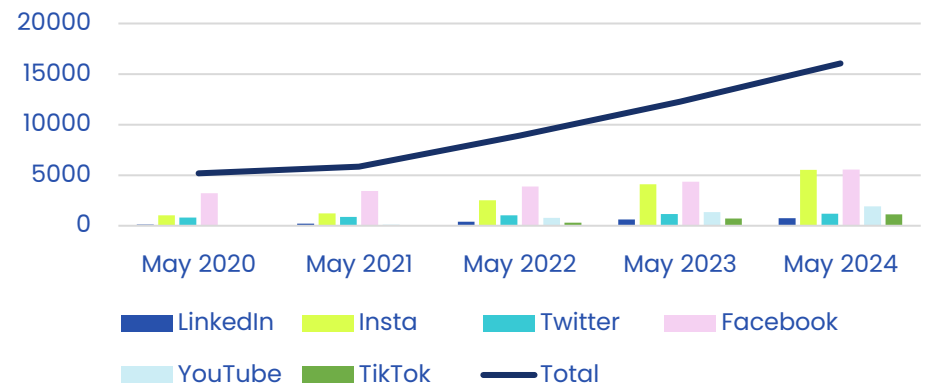
quality of our live stream has significantly improved this year with an investment in technology and training.

Showcasing our people and sport must be done in an exciting and professional manner, and with that in mind we have agreed a partnership with **Sport Narrative** to assist in the development of quality content including a documentary series, which was piloted with Alessandra Trio during the Sport Ireland Women in Sport week.

Whilst we do aim to promote Volleyball in general, we utilise our channels to promote referee courses, coach education, ticket sales, retail products and club activities. We have started monetising our YouTube channel and Monster Block newsletter, to generate more organic revenue.

More work needs to be done to engage audiences that don't already follow us – this will likely take the form of a media partnership.

Social Media Channel Followers





## Case Study: VLY. & Cork LSP

At the core of successful development is good collaboration and strong partnerships. In this case study we will highlight the relationship and the benefits yielded for our own National Governing Body (NGB) and the Local Sports Partnership (LSP) in Cork.

Volleyball Ireland's strategic decision in August 2023 to appoint a Cork-based development officer (Arnolda Stankaitiene), has turned Cork into Ireland's fastest-growing volleyball county, regarding new clubs created. Using one of her key strengths - networking, Arnolda has found unprecedented success within the county.

Pre-August, there had been solid intermittent programme work with the excellent LSP staffing of James Kirby and Maurice O'Sullivan. Post August, VLY's new development officer has been on the ground and able to strengthen those relationships through continuous weekly and monthly joint efforts to bring more physical activity, and more Volleyball, to the people of Cork.

Recreational events in the county have doubled to cater for team entry and new regional leagues in Division 3 and U16 have emerged due to demand. New names like Buttevant Victory, Vollewood Stars, BREND, King Octopus, and more have surfaced thanks to the combined support from James and Arnolda. VLY's new club starter packs, including training balls and reduced insurance fees for new clubs, have been an important support for new start-ups.

However, combining these with Cork LSP's financial contributions to coaching workshops and tournament hall hire, we have been able to deliver a more serious impact when needed. Clever planning and

developing trust with every joint initiative has ensured more volleyball within the county.

The deliberate targeting of Cork County as well as the city and inner-city, using government funding opportunities has and will in the future help to enable further access to volleyball. Play in The Park (Inner city) West Cork Project (County) and Active Cities Park Tour (City) are all agreed partnership programmes moving ahead this summer. With over 200 already in attendance across 6 new county clubs in Skibbereen, Bantry, Clonakilty, Bandon and Dunmanway, success for NGB, LSP, and the local people is happening.

Local knowledge, insight, and assistance from the Cork LSP has led to support with permits for events, new indoor and outdoor courts being erected in county and city locations, and a personal invitation to Cork's massive '*2024 SUMMER SHOW*'.

Visibility is everything, to raise awareness of our game and local clubs. There are too many joint initiatives to mention within this short case study but one key learning over the last 10 months is - *together stronger* - because at the core of successful development is good collaboration and strong partnerships.

We hope to replicate this partnership model with other Local Sports Partnerships across Ireland.



4



# Finance

Finance Report including PnL movements, Balance Sheet and Grants



# Finance Summary.

## Key Results

- Turnover up 33%
- Loss doubled to 12.3k versus 2022
- Organic revenues increased by 100k
- Online shop revenue up 39%

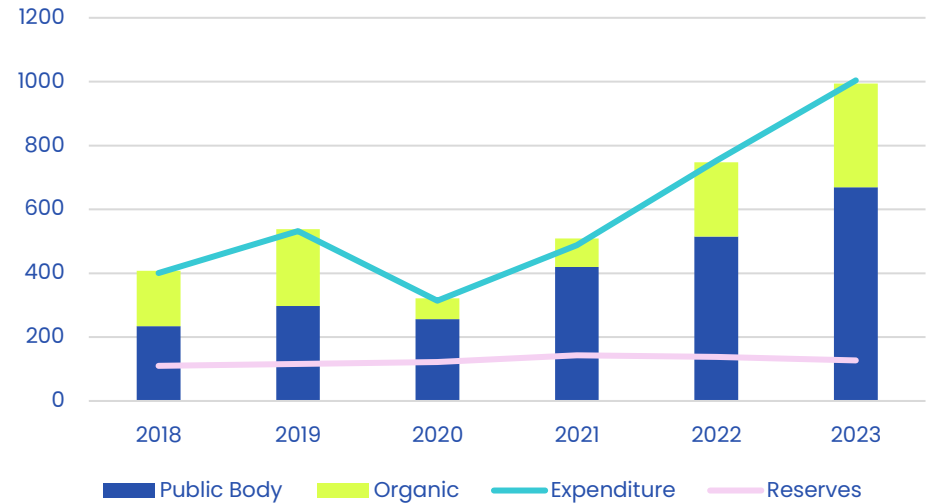
Volleyball Ireland continues to grow and break new ground in financial terms whilst remaining in a stable position.

Spending has crossed the €1 million mark for the first time, with turnover increasing by €237k to €995k (+33%) v 2022. This is almost double the €509K turnover of 2021. As the sport continues to grow, our loss for 2023 is more than double what it was last year at €12.3k. This loss is aligned with our reserves policy, and is part of the investment plan to reposition Volleyball in the Irish sporting landscape.

A key focus over the last few years has been becoming less dependent on Sport Ireland funding. We have made strong progress on this, increasing non-public body income by 43%.

Whilst organic funding has grown, it still remains around 30% of total revenue which is in-line with 2022. This is due to a number of previously deferred Sport Ireland grants being activated in 2023. This is a good sign for future growth.

Income & Source, Expenditure, Reserves



A key target for 2023 was diversification of our funding streams. We managed to increase our shop revenue by 39% however we failed in gaining meaningful sponsorship contributions.

We are confident that significant sponsorship will be generated in 2024, due to the increased exposure and enhanced profile of Volleyball at our disposal due to the hosting of the u20 Women’s European Championships. We expect to announce a global brand as a key sponsor shortly.



**Profit & Loss Analysis**

- Player pathway programme expenditure is up 84.5% while income is only up by 53% resulting in a loss of around 15K. Clear evidence of our push on development and trying to create a strong player pathway.
- Competition costs naturally rose in 2023 v 2022, due to the reintroduction of the Association Cup, Championships and the new Grand Finals event. Covering the costs of competitions, as we try and expand the level of those events, is a key consideration for the coming year.
- National team expenditure has increased by 50K with income increasing 47K.
- Likewise, the coaching and refereeing department has seen expenditure increase by 12K and being matched by a 12K income increase.
- Grant expenditure increased by 35% to 701K. The increase is mainly down to Sports Capital Grant project expenditure of 57K on club equipment and dormant account spending on employees. We've also received better support from FIVB and CEV.
- Operational Costs have reduced by 13K which illustrates tight controls and a no-frills approach to office management despite growth in spending in other areas. An office move to Sport Ireland HQ has also aided this.
- Salary expenditure increased by 45% as our staff grew to 9 employees. The vast majority of this increase was grant funded for specific participation & inclusion projects. Core Staff

expenditure increased very little in comparison at 10K which is expected to continue year on year with inflation and increased activity levels of our staff.

This table provides a high level summary of where we receive our funding, and where we spend it.

Where we get our money from	Total	What we spend it on	Total
Awards Dinner	€8,215	Awards Dinner	€13,055
Coaching & Referees	€18,829	Coaching & Referees	€20,923
Competitions	€27,298	Competitions	€43,149
Equipment Sales	€29,835	Cost of Equipment Sales	€22,605
Grants	€701,478	Project Grant Costs	€299,663
Other Income	€330	Intl Events	€5,577
National Team Fees & Fundraising	€98,217	National Team Costs	€148,649
Player Pathway Programme	€31,362	Player Pathway Programme	€46,874
Player Registrations	€41,717	Salaries	€305,016
Schools	€24,716	Schools	€17,116
Staff Coaching Services	€12,575	Staff Coaching Services	€3,028
Sponsorship	€144	Sustainability Project	€3,552
		Depreciation	€563
		Operational Costs	€75,457
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>€994,717</b>	<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>€1,005,227</b>

A detailed Profit & Loss comparison with 2022 is available on p.22 of the audited accounts.



## Reserves

As we have sustained back-to-back minor losses, the reserves of the organisation have reduced to 127k. A formal Reserves policy was agreed by the Board which sets our target of Reserves at €100,000.

## Ivan Gormally

The Ivan Gormally fund has not been utilised in 2023, largely due to the covid funding that has allowed increased support for youth national teams. A long-term application will be submitted to the Ivan Gormally fund in the coming months to make best use of his generous bequest.

## Balance Sheet

The cash at hand within the organisation has decreased significantly from 661K to 374k. This is largely due to grant expenditure, and grants being owed to us, but not yet received. There was 140K less grant funding being held on the balance sheet at year end. A small decrease in this figure was to be expected as it was necessary to fully drawdown the last 17.3K of our COVID restart Grant from prior years. It is, however, a large decrease as at year end YLY was owed 111K, mainly from public bodies and other secure sporting bodies. This is 95K more than what was owed to us at the same stage last year.

## Future Plans

With Covid-19 related grants drying up, and previously deferred grants spent it is more important than ever that we diversify our revenues. Expect to see more activity from an equipment, merchandise and fundraising nature over the next 12 months.

Balance Sheet	2023	2022	2021
<b>Fixed Assets</b>			
Tangible Assets	-	581	4,580
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Stocks	37,019	21,861	12,942
Debtors	148,425	33,389	88,131
Cash & Equivalent	374,016	661,205	561,658
	<b>559,460</b>	<b>716,455</b>	<b>662,731</b>
<b>Creditors due within 1 year</b>	-433,902	-579,168	-524,707
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	125,558	137,287	138,024
<b>Total Assets Less current liabilities</b>	125,558	137,867	142,603
<b>Capital and Reserves</b>			
Income & Expenditure Account	125,558	137,867	142,603

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# Governance

The fun stuff covering the Board, Staff, Audit & Risk



## Company Info.

Volleyball Ireland is the Governing body for the sport of Volleyball in the 26 counties of Ireland. Formed in 1968, the organisation's core work is to organise a range of competitions and programmes to grow participation in the sport, leading to an improvement in National team performance in both Volleyball and Beach Volleyball formats of the game.

As the National Federation, we are affiliated to the Confederation de Europeene Volleyball (CEV), Federation de Internationale Volleyball (FIVB), Olympic Federation of Ireland (OFI) and are members of the Federation of Irish Sport, as well as being a Sport Ireland funded body.

Our members are our clubs with National League clubs having AGM voting rights. 'Senior' clubs have two votes and are defined as having a minimum of 4 x National League teams, of which at least one is a junior team.



**Legal Name:** Volleyball Association of Ireland, Company Limited by Guarantee

**Trading Name:** Volleyball Ireland

**Registered Office:** Unit 1, Sports HQ2, Sport Ireland Campus, Dublin 15

**Website:** volleyballireland.com

**Principal Bankers:** Bank of Ireland, Ballsbridge

**Auditor:** Searing Point

**Company Number:** 317399

**Directors:**

**President (Chair):** Clodagh NicCanna (Doherty)

**Secretary:** Regina Halpin

**Treasurer:** Doris Enright (resigned Nov 2023)

**Vice President:** Alfredo Aloï (resigned Dec 2023)

**Ordinary:** Elisabeth Rae (co-opted Jan 2024)\*

**Ordinary:** Gavin Dredge (co-opted Jan 2024)\*

**Independent:** Cliona Boland (resigned April 2024)

**Independent:** Patrick Murphy (joined February 2024)

**Co-Opted:** Stephen Moreton

**Co-Opted:** Lochlann Walsh

\*Gavin & Elisabeth co-opted until the 2024 AGM

**Chief Executive:** Gary Stewart



## Board Activities.

The Volleyball Ireland Board has gender balance with a 50:50 split of Female: Male Directors. Volleyball Ireland were one of the first National Governing Bodies of Sport with gender balance on their Board.

Two Directors were born outside of Ireland.

Due to personal reasons Doris Enright and Alfredo Alois resigned in late 2023. To fill the casual vacancies left by Doris and Alfredo, the Board co-opted Gavin Dredge & Elisabeth Rae and they can remain on the Board until the next AGM (June 2024) where they must be elected by the members. Cliona Boland's 3-year term as Independent Director ended in April 2024. Patrick Murphy was recommended by the Nominations panel and ratified by members to become an Independent Director.

### Meetings

The Board met formally eight times since the last AGM, held in June 2022, and other ad hoc project specific meetings. Overall, the board had an 88% attendance rate which is up 1% on last year.

Chief Executive, Gary Stewart reports to the Board and sits in on Board Meetings in a non-voting capacity. Gary attended 9/9 Board Meetings since the last AGM and was absent when his performance and remuneration package was an agenda item.

### Substantive Board Decisions 2023/24

Since the 2022 AGM the board has made the following substantive decisions:

- Approval of new remuneration package for the CEO and staff
- Approval of various tenders related to hosting the u20 Women's European Championships
- Approved new code of conduct for all members
- Approved the 2024 budget
- Approved the nomination of Clodagh NicCanna to stand for the CEV Board of Administration in the 2024 elections
- Signed an updated Sport Ireland Governance Code Assurance Statement
- Commissioned a Board Effectiveness Review

### Board Member Selection

The Board can be composed of between six and nine Directors, of which two must be Independent and recommended by a Nominations Committee. The Nominations Committee is currently comprised of President Clodagh NicCanna and two non-board or staff members. The Board can co-opt up to two Directors based on a skills gap analysis of the Board. All other Directors are elected by the Membership at an AGM or EGM.

Board members complete a skills gap analysis, the results of which help inform decision-making around co-opting new Directors.

### Board Member Induction & Training

Volleyball Ireland have developed a robust and in-depth induction programme which includes 1v1 meetings with staff, Commissions and fellow Directors, as well as formal training from external industry experts on the principals of Good Governance and the Role of a Board



Member. The Board also underwent Finance report training delivered by former Treasurer Rachael Kilgallen.

A menu of training opportunities provided by Carmichael is available, as are a range of training supports from Sport Ireland. Upon joining the Board all Directors must sign a Letter of Appointment detailing their roles and responsibilities, and take part in a *Role of the Board* Training session. A calendar of training opportunities is provided related to a skills self-assessment that each Board Member completes. This method will be replicated with Commission members ahead of the new committee cycle.

### Board Effectiveness

In late 2023, the Board commissioned an independent Board Effectiveness Review. Industry expert Adrian McCarthy carried out a comprehensive project that made a number of recommendations, including a reduction in the frequency of Board meetings, more weight placed on the expert Audit & Risk Committee and more in-person meetings.

In summary, the report concluded that *Volleyball Ireland (VLY) is a successful and effective Type-B national governing body (NGB) (as defined by Sport Ireland), overseen by accomplished Board members from diverse volleyball and non-volleyball backgrounds.*

The full review can be found [here](#).

### External Audit

In the Summer of 2023, Volleyball Ireland underwent an external Sport Ireland 'pulse audit', to assess the current levels of governance and financial oversight.

The audit, carried out by KOSI, was positive with Volleyball Ireland found to have **substantial compliance** with the Governance Code. Substantial compliance is the 4<sup>th</sup> highest rating out of 5, and is defined as:

*Key controls exist but there may be some inconsistency in application. Compensatory controls are operating effectively. Assurance can be given that the system will achieve its objectives safely.*

### The Role of the Board

The Board of Volleyball Ireland meets regularly so as to provide strategic leadership to the Company, exercise effective control over the organisation, and monitor executive management and performance.

The Board is in a transition from executive to non-executive with a number of Directors supporting the organisation operationally through the commission structure. It comprises nominees of the Membership, through election, co-option by the Board and independent Directors. The primary responsibility of all Directors is to act in the best overall interest of Volleyball Ireland at all times.

Some Board Members will hold portfolios and act as the accountable person for delivery of each Commission and Board Sub-Committee operational plans. Directors can hold multiple portfolios.

Specific responsibilities of the Board are:

- To provide vision, leadership and direction for the Company, normally through the consideration and approval of Strategic Plans



- In this context, to define the Company's mission, decide its strategic goals and approve policies to achieve those goals
- To ensure that the Company is well managed and that a proper balance is maintained between the respective roles of the Board and the CEO and staff
- To set performance targets and, in particular, to approve and monitor the Annual Operating Plan and Budget
- To agree the CEO's performance objectives in consultation with him/her

#### Conflict of Interests

The board has a conflict of interest and loyalty policy whereby each Director must declare any potential conflicts of interest and/or loyalty by written statement at the start of each year. Any board meeting agenda items which may raise a conflict are recorded in the minutes at the start of each Board Meeting. Conflict of Interests 2023-24: **Nil**. The *Conflict of Interest and Loyalty* policy was reviewed and amended in 2023, in line with Sport Ireland Governance Code recommendations. The next review date is October 2025.

#### Governance Code

In December 2020, Volleyball Ireland adopted and is compliant with the Sport Ireland Governance Code as a type B organisation. The Code includes the adoption of 64 different actions across five principles of good governance.

The Board completes an annual statement of assurance of compliance with the Sport Ireland Governance Code. In 2023, the only

outstanding action was the completion of the Board effectiveness review and proper establishment of the ARC, which are now complete.

#### Decision Making

In summary, the Board control and govern the organisation. Strategic powers are distributed to the Commissions or Board Sub-Committees. Where necessary, Commissions may establish sub-committees to oversee competitions or specific tasks.

Staff are assigned to the day-to-day operations of the company, helping and supporting Commissions and Sub-Committees to carry out their functions. In short, the Board through the Commissions set the strategic direction for the company, and staff are tasked with ensuring its delivery.

#### Performance Management & Reporting

Volleyball Ireland's Performance Management and Reporting system are aligned with Performance objectives established for staff at the start of the year. Monthly Activities Reports relate to these objectives. Board Meeting papers are typically circulated 7 days in advance of Board Meetings and include updates from Commissions, staff and Management Accounts.

Each staff member takes part in an annual performance review, with weekly 1v1s. The President acts as the line manager to the Chief Executive, who is the line manager of all staff within the organisation.

#### Remuneration

Any alterations to employee remuneration is advised by the formed HR & Remuneration Committee, which is chaired by an Independent



expert in this field. Staff salaries are reviewed annually. There is a KPI based bonus available for staff. The Board ratify any decisions in this regard and at the end of 2023 approved new remuneration packages for staff.

### Committees and Commissions

As well as sport focussed Commissions, the Board has established a number of Sub-Committees to focus on the business side of the organisation. Like the Commissions, each Committee has a board member representative and supporting staff member. Taking the entire structure into consideration our Committees have gender balance with a 55/45 split. 37% of Committee members were born abroad which is reflective of our cultural diversity.

A new induction and training programme, as well as a strengthening of our governance arrangement relating to Commissions and Committees will be introduced fully in 2024. This will include term limits, effectiveness surveys and letters of appointment for each Committee. The system will replicate the arrangements for the Board.

### Office

In October 2023, we made the move to the new Sport HQ2 at the Sport Ireland Campus. This relocation presents an opportunity to collaborate better with other NGBs. Financially, it has resulted in a rent saving.

### PADACC

The Protests, Appeals, Disciplinary and Complaints Commission was formed in 2022 to give a more consistent and independent approach to handling disciplinary issues.

During the season 6 protests were received which is similar to last season. One protest was initially rejected before being upheld on appeal.

A number of potential protests, specifically relating to on-court refereeing decisions were rejected. It isn't the panel's role to re-referee matches and competition related protests should be based on rule interpretations, and not genuine errors.

### Anti-Doping

It remains a condition of an adult player's registration to play in the National Leagues that each completes Sport Ireland's anti-doping information module and we remain one of the few NGB's who insist on doing so. No Anti-Doping testing was carried out at any Volleyball Ireland events, or out of competition.

All National team players have completed the FIVB PlayClean online course as well as Sport Ireland's module.

### Garda Vetting

Over the last 12 months, VLY successfully processed 11 Garda Vetting applications, up 21%. The processing time and workload involved in managing GV is increasing.

Following a question at last year's AGM, and based on guidance received from the National Vetting Bureau, Volleyball Ireland changed the policy of vetting coaches and referees – now only volunteers working specifically with under 18s shall be vetted.



## Current Board Members.

Name	Bio	Att.	Term Info
Clodagh NicCanna (Doherty) President (since May 2021)	Clodagh is a Director of a global software development team who write software for the Optical Industry. Clodagh started playing Volleyball at the age of 13 in DCGA and has represented Ireland at various age groups through to the Senior team. She's held a number of leadership roles within clubs and within Volleyball Ireland including Competitions Secretary.	8/8	Joined 14/10/2019 1 term completed
Elisabeth Rae Co-Opted	Elisabeth is a current player with Net Force Cork. She has extensive finance, audit and governance experience working with a number of multi-nationals. Originally from North America, Beth is the former President of the Bermuda Volleyball Association and is an experienced Beach and Volleyball coach.	3/3	Joined 06/02/2024
Regina Halpin Secretary (since Sept 2018)	Regina is an active player for UCD, as well as on both Volleyball and Beach Volleyball National Team squads. Hailing from Co. Galway, Regina is a qualified physiotherapist. Regina has been involved in volleyball from a young age and has represented Ireland at junior level as well as Senior honours.	8/8	Joined 19/07/2018 2 terms completed
Patrick Murphy Independent	Patrick is a leading sports marketeer and founder of a number of marketing agencies including Branding Sport and Nudge. Patrick has devised some of Irish Sports' leading brand identities working for clients like the Olympic Federation of Ireland, Swim Ireland, Rory McIlroy and Shane Lowry.	3/3	Joined 04/02/2024
Lochlann Walsh Co-Opted	Lochlann is a highly experienced Board member in the sport world. He served eight successful years as President of Triathlon Ireland, and is a current member of the Board of the Olympic Federation of Ireland. In his professional career, Lochlann is a global sales manager for a multi-billion dollar US based tech firm.	7/8	Joined 20/06/2021 1 terms completed
Stephen Moreton Co-Opted	Stephen is a former professional cricketer, who has worked in a number of professional coaching roles including as Head Coach for the Ireland Women's team. Stephen has an MBA in International Sports Management from Loughborough University.	5/8	Joined 30/03/2022 1 terms completed
Gavin Dredge Co-Opted	Gavin has extensive experience in the finance sector, working in asset management, reinsurance, trading and investments, in Dublin and London. Gavin is the nephew of Tony McCrossan, a legendary figure in Irish Volleyball.	2/3	Joined 06/02/2024



## Managing Risk.

The definition of risk appetite is the amount of risk an organisation is willing to take to reach its objectives. With this in mind the board have created a risk appetite statement that explains the amount of risk the Board are willing to take. The risk appetite statement will inform any amendments to the risk register – which they newly established ARC will review and present to the board routinely.

### Risk Appetite

Understanding our risk appetite will help us govern effectively, making informed decisions across all areas of the organisation. There are certain risks that we will not tolerate, and some in which we have a high tolerance for. The following scale highlights the spectrum of risk tolerance.

Volleyball Ireland’s strategic goals each have a differing tolerance level. This is a summary of those tolerance levels

Risk Seeking 10-9	Risk Tolerant 8-7	Risk Neutral 6-5	Moderately Risk Averse 4-3	Risk Averse 2-1
We believe that taking greater risks is justified to reap significant rewards and achieve strategic objectives.	We are willing to take some risks and take some negative impact than we normally would to achieve strategic objectives	We will take a balanced and informed approach, willing to accept both positive and negative impacts	We will take a cautious approach to taking risks, with only a small negative impact being tolerated	We will not tolerate any risk nor any negative impact

Key Strategic Areas and Functions	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
1 Participation and Growth	Green	Green								
2 Operational Standards including Compliance									Red	Red
3 Player, Coach & Referee Development			Light Green	Light Green						
4 Marketing & Promotion	Green	Green								
5 Fundraising & Finance (Revenues and budgeting)					Light Blue	Light Blue				
6 Reputation and Image							Blue	Blue		
7 People Management							Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Red	Red



## Risk Register

Supporting the risk appetite statement is a comprehensive risk register which the Audit & Risk Committee routinely and presents to the Board. The board identified the following as some of the key risks for 2023/24.

Risk Summary	Mitigation Action
Increased demand for the sport on clubs will limit capacity for growth. Despondency towards access may hurt participation.	Recruitment staff on a more regional basis with more emphasis on club support. Consider more staff in part time roles.
Hosting of European Championships may have significant risk to the organisation's finances	Lobby CEV for increase to the per diem rate, and engage with Sport Ireland in relation to additional support as a major event. Develop sponsorship packages.
Government funding dries up with post Covid meaning less project grant funds available	Diversify revenues, generating more organic funding and grants from other sources.
Club facilities becoming dated, unavailable for hire and equipment unsafe for usage turns players away from Volleyball. New clubs not being able to hire facilities with adequate volleyball equipment.	Sports Capital applications to support new clubs and growing youth sections.
Not enough coaches and referees to meet the demand, with increased entries into National League and other competitions. Not enough coaches and referees at a high level to support talent pathway and improvement to leagues.	Invest in Coaching & Referee training and supports to recruit more people into those roles. Review and relaunch coach and referee pathways.



# Staff.

An increase in Sport Ireland grants and new support from the FIVB has allowed Volleyball Ireland to make some key appointments and changes to its staff structure.

Graham Bell joined the team in September as our first ever full-time coach, focussing on youth and coach education. Graham’s salary is supported by FIVB with Sport Ireland helping with associated project costs.

Amanda Burgio stepped down from her full-time role at last year’s AGM, and rather than replacing like-for-like, we changed tact and recruited three part-time staff members: Arnolda Staikatiene, Lina Dzurnak and Joe Hyland. This system has allowed more local work and better networking with Local Sports Partnerships.

Gabriel Akinwande was a fully funded Sport Ireland post, who has now joined the core staff in the Operations team working on events and national team administration. Gabriel leads our Live Stream productions.

Samuel Tavares joined VLY. In late Spring on a four-month internship.



**Gary Stewart, CEO**

## Operations



**Simon Dyke**  
Operations Manager



**Gabriel Akinwande**  
Operations Coordinator



**Matt Ford**  
Finance Manager

## Development



**Conor Flood**  
Development Manager



**Arnolda Staikatiene**  
Development Officer South



**Lina Dzurnak**  
Development Officer East



**Joe Hyland**  
Development Officer Midlands

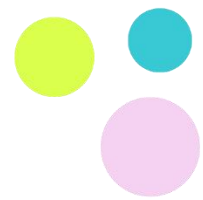
## Performance & Pathways



**Graham Bell**  
Head Youth Coach



**Buzz**  
Mascot





## What Do You Think?

We'd love some feedback on our annual report. Is it too wordy? Not enough stats? Not enough case studies? It is too long?

Drop Gary a note [gm@volleyballireland.com](mailto:gm@volleyballireland.com) and let us know how we can improve it for next season.



# The End.