

2022 Chairpersons report – April 2023

Paul O’Sullivan-Hourihan

It’s difficult to believe 12 months have passed since we were dancing the “Siege of Ennis” in Killarney. The long-deferred IOC hosted by Kerry O and Cork O eventually took place and we emerged from the shadow of the previous year’s restrictions. The provincial rotation of the National Championships was adjusted to ensure that Orienteering Ireland could combine with NIOA to host the Emerald Isle festival. Here is to a successful festival of top-class orienteering beginning this weekend with IOC2023 organised by CNOG.

Much has happened for Orienteering Ireland in the last year, and I hope to share the significant events and memories below.

The year began with the previous chairperson Mary O’Connell stepping down, as per the constitution requirements. On behalf of the Executive committee and the Orienteering community I would like to thank Mary for her stewardship of the organisation over the previous challenging years. In addition, Debbie Whelan stepped away from her position of Comms Officer. There were no nominations for this appointment at the AGM. Later in the year Fiona Buckley – BOC – was co-opted on to the committee to fulfil the Comms appointment.

This year Darren Burke has decided to call time on his role as High Performance Manager. We thank him for his considerable contribution to the senior squad both as manager and athlete over many years.

In addition, Rob McEvoy is stepping away from his position as Anti-Doping officer. Many thanks to Rob for his contribution in this appointment.

As per the constitution all committee positions are vacant at the AGM. Any nominations for any position on the Executive Committee can be made in advance of, or at the AGM.

There are also two non-executive positions to be filled;

- Anti-doping officer
- Data liaison officer

A huge thank you to Barbara Foley-Fisher for all her work as National Designated Liaison supporting our child protection requirements.

Following the renaming of IOA to Orienteering Ireland and the rebranding associated with our new logos etc we launched our new and updated website. This continues to evolve, and we continue to work at ensuring this public face of Orienteering Ireland is the best it can be. Special word of thanks to Gavan Doherty for all his support.

In late summer Aine Joyce informed the organisation of her intention to seek new challenges and bring to a close circa 15 years of exceptional service. As you can imagine this was a seismic change. Where would we find another “Aine Joyce”.

The Executive committee set about advertising, interviewing and appointing a new General Administrator. This process took a significant amount of time and effort by everybody involved. We were very impressed by all the candidates who applied for the position. A special word of thanks to Mary O’Connell for her involvement in this process. Following the interview process Eric O’Brien was appointed to the position. Thankfully Aine facilitated us by staying with us until January allowing an opportunity for a comprehensive handover to Eric.

On behalf of Orienteering Ireland I thank Aine for her input over the past fifteen or so years. Her professionalism, corporate knowledge, experience, and friendly demeanour were all contributory factors in the development of Orienteering at all levels.

Eric has settled in and is already displaying the skills and enthusiasm that should see the development of our sport continue.

In addition, we renewed the contracts for Deirdre Ní Challanáin and Mark Stephens. They continue to support our efforts to provide as professional a product as possible. The Operations team of Eric, Deirdre and Mark support the delivery of our various courses, interact with LSP's around the country and provide admin support to the organisation and much more.

In May last year Orienteering Ireland were nominated by Sport Ireland to undergo a Governance audit. This was carried out by an independent audit company and reviewed our procedures, policies and practices to ensure compliance with Sport Ireland Governance requirements. The findings of the auditors were that, when benchmarked against the identified definitions, our organisation attracted an assurance rating of "**Substantial Assurance**". This finding is particularly commendable given the effort required from volunteer board members.

The Orienteering Ireland Governance sub-committee, under the stewardship of John McCullough, continues to endeavour to ensure we meet the exacting Governance standards to protect Orienteering Ireland and strengthen our case for increased funding when available.

During the year we submitted our 5 year plan for the development of Orienteering to Sport Ireland. Our postal address changed to a PO box on the National sports campus. This is in line with our ambition of increasing our profile on the campus.

The journey to CLG has not been completed yet. Despite an incredible amount of work from many people on the committee we are not there yet. We are confident of completing this process in the next quarter and look forward to the next stage in the development of the organisation to a Company Limited by Guarantee.

In addition to the above the Orienteering must go on. It is important to remember why we do this – the enjoyment of running with map in hand! The importance of volunteerism is more important than ever. Without volunteers we won't be able to deliver on all our ambitions. If you believe you can contribute, please do.

I would like to thank in particular the Executive Committee for their hard work during the past year. All the volunteers on the committee give their time willingly for the development of the sport of Orienteering. It is important that we don't lose sight of the fact that Orienteering Ireland is there to support our clubs. These are exciting times for Orienteering and its development. There is a huge opportunity and ambition to develop our sport.

I am sure you will all enjoy this year's IOC. Many thanks to Hugh Cashell and all the team from CNOG for this year's championships. Next year we head West to Connacht and look forward to the challenges presented by Frank Ryan and his team.

Kind Regards

Paul