



Strategic Plan for 2013-2016



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President's Introduction

This strategic plan outlines the direction for Athletics Ireland for the period 2013- 2016. The document complements Athletics Ireland's High Performance Plan 2013-2016 published earlier in 2013.

Athletics Ireland is the representative body for athletic disciplines in Ireland. We act as the co-ordinating body between clubs, schools and universities and in doing so we stand over the regional, national and international competitions across the athletic disciplines of Track & Field, Cross-Country, Road Running, Mountain Running, Ultra-Running and Mass Participation events.

We have a number of discrete roles in delivering upon this activity, including:

- Coaching: The development of coaches and officials
- Competition/High Performance: Designing programmes that will engage the youngest competitors through to the masters with high performance as a special category
- Sport for all: Encouraging engagement and participation in athletics across the wider population
- Finance and Administration: Maintaining the balance between cost and administrative oversight and being a members representative organisation

We have a wide remit of administration and financial management, athlete safety, particularly of our youngest members, and the oversight and delivery of the competitions that are the lifeblood of our Association. Our organisation has been through much change and development in the last three years as we raise standards of professionalism, while administrative pressures increase. It is right to review our impact and delivery while at the same time continuing to develop the organisation and the sport for the coming years.

With all of these goals and challenges, sometimes conflicting, it is good management practice to develop a strategic plan, charting our way for the coming years. This strategy is not locked in stone, it is dynamic to the conditions and activities that we choose to take on an annual basis, but it does provide direction and structure towards achieving our overall vision and goals.

I look forward to working with the Board and Management of Athletics Ireland and with all our stakeholders in the implementation of this plan and ensuring that we excel in every aspect of our activity from mass participation to elite athlete performance.

Ciaran Ó Catháin,
President



Executive Summary

This strategic plan has been developed in order to achieve the key objectives of Athletics Ireland.

The key elements of the plan are:

- Growth in our overall membership.
- Continued development of our top and up-and-coming athletes to new competitive heights.
- Effective and efficient management of our business, from governance to financial transparency.
- Promotion of the health and safety of our members.
- Ensuring appropriate interaction with stakeholders, including the alignment of this plan with their goals and objectives.
- The development of our coaching network.
- Providing continuous development and support for officials.
- The development of athlete activity to the population as a whole.

The challenge presented by the economic environment is significant for all sports. More than ever, the value of sport in Ireland is at an all time high and the current growth in participation in athletics is very positive.

Athletics Ireland's sphere of influence extends beyond its membership. The recreational importance of the sport is very significant and with a growing number of adults and children taking part in athletic activities, our organisation is adjusting to manage a participative environment in which everyone who wishes to take part can do so easily.

We see important dynamic changes to our operating environment, from the new strategy by our key stakeholder the Irish Sports Council, to the opening of the major new indoor athletics facility at Athlone IT. This has the potential to change the way we operate and the manner in which we deliver services to our members far into the future.

We acknowledge the unique characteristic of a professional executive who are heavily dependent on the support, advice and direction of voluntary members of the board, committees, regions, coaches and clubs and we aim to promote this working relationship as a mutually beneficial and supportive one. Our High Performance programme is deserving of our great support, representing the pinnacle of our achievements. High Performance management will have a full Olympic cycle to work with towards Rio 2016 and it will be a key component of this plan to enable early talent identification and support through clubs, schools, colleges and into adult training camps.

We commit to a mid-term review of this strategic plan to determine success factors and areas that need further support and development in our plan towards 2016. We aim to play our full part in "Getting Ireland running, walking, jumping and throwing" and providing an athletics "Opportunity for All".

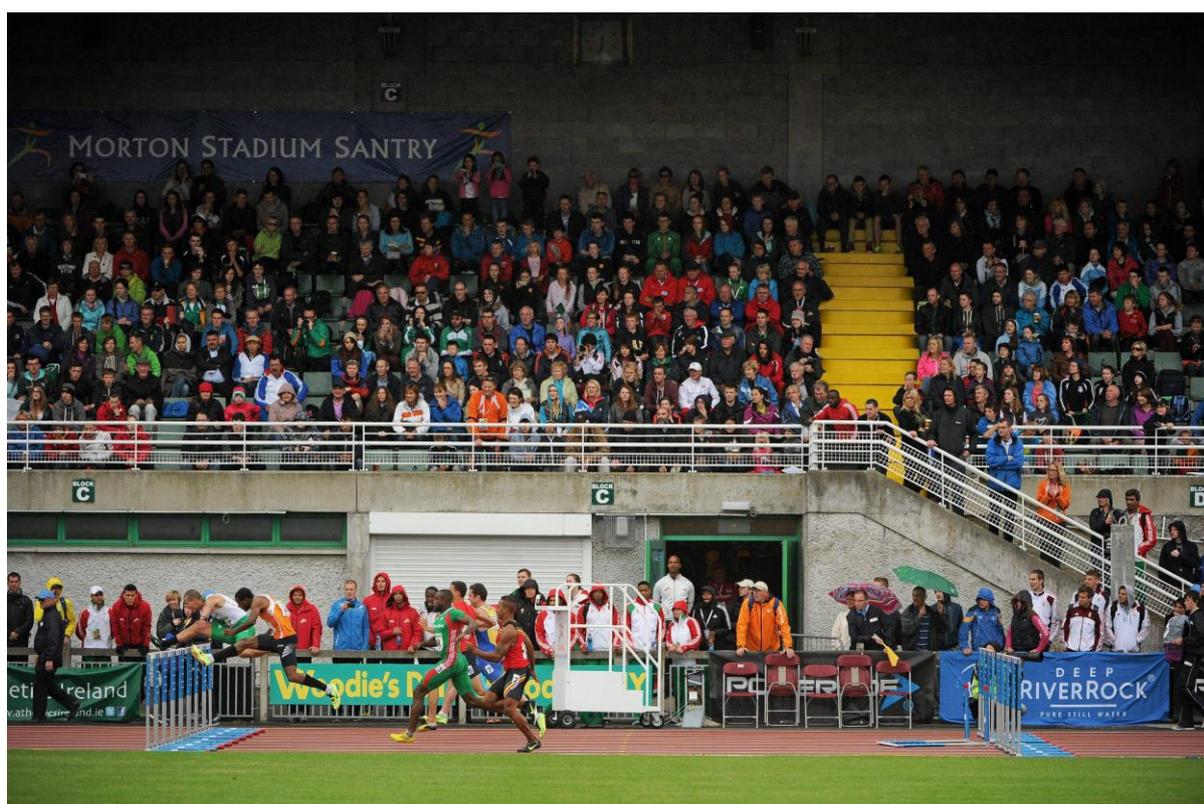
John Foley
Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

Where have we come from?

Over the past three years we have made significant strides in developing a more stable organisational environment while implementing programmes and activities which are moving the organisation forward.

Due to the economic environment, and in-line with other sporting bodies, the organisation has been subject to a reduction in government support, which we understand in the current climate could not be avoided, However, careful cost management and an increase in revenue generating initiatives have enabled us to operate all of our major programmes. These revenue gains boost the very significant and deeply appreciated contribution made by our long term core funders, The Irish Sports Council and our sponsors, particularly Woodies DIY. As an organisation, we must continue to demonstrate value for our sponsors and an understanding of their needs.



23 June 2013; A general view of competitors in action during the Men's 110m Hurdles event during the European Athletics Team Championships 1st League, Morton Stadium, Santry, Co. Dublin. Picture credit: Tomas Grealb / SPORTSFILE

Membership

The membership of Athletics Ireland has more than doubled in the six years since 2007. This level of growth has been achieved through the work of the Development Team and Volunteers throughout the country in existing clubs and forming new clubs. Also, the achievement of our talented athletes particularly Robert Heffernan, Derval O'Rourke, David Gillick, Olive Loughnane and Fionnuala Britton have been key to attracting interest our sport. The membership growth is also reflective of the growth in recreational running generally in Ireland assisted by our Fit4Life and Little Athletics programmes.

Growth in membership will continue to be a major priority. Focus will be on working with clubs to ensure that appropriate coaching structures are in place to cater for the membership.

Athletics Ireland growth in membership

| <i>Year</i> | <i>2007</i> | <i>2008</i> | <i>2009</i> | <i>2010</i> | <i>2011</i> | <i>2012</i> | <i>2013 Est</i> |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| <i>Total Members</i> | <i>20,036</i> | <i>26,676</i> | <i>29,682</i> | <i>33,436</i> | <i>35,490</i> | <i>42,202</i> | <i>49,500</i> |



Coaching

The development of the coaching team has progressed over the last number of years in, High Performance and Nationally/Regionally/Locally.

The appointment of a new Director of High Performance in 2011 was crucial to progressing our High Performance athletes in the international competitive sphere. A detailed High Performance Plan is now in place, abbreviated versions of which are a key pillar of the overall Athletics Ireland strategic plan.

Development of coaching capability is summarized as follows:

Number of coaches by level attained

| Level | Leader | Assistant Coach | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|--------------------------|--------|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Number of Coaches (2011) | 364 | 393 | 306 | 110 | 9 |
| Number of Coaches (2012) | 457 | 269 | 318 | 80 | 23 |

We aim to continue this support during the course of this strategic plan, focusing on the development of a cross section of our athletic disciplines by age, location, and capability.

Focus in coaching will be on ensuring that we recruit Coaches and provide support at each level of development. There will be a continuing emphasis on the area of High Performance coaching, working with the IAAF, to ensure that Ireland's coaches are internationally recognised for their expertise.



Competition

Our events and championships and the management of our competitions have shown significant progress over the past two years. We have designed and installed an electronic competition management system and an online entry system, both of which significantly improve our capability to deliver effective competitions from the point of view of the organisation, our officials and most importantly our competitors.

We acknowledge the capital grant support from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in this regard.

Athletics Ireland – Officials

The development of our officials has also progressed over the last number of years, with an increase certified as Level IV officials overall and a clear progression through the ranking systems.

Number of officials by level attained

| Ranking Attained | Grade 3 National | Grade 4 National Chief/Referee | Grade 5 NTO | Grade 6 International | NWJ (National Walking Judges) |
|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Number of Officials | 91 (+6 Shadow) | 42 | 21 | 4 | 21 |

The development of our officials will continue to be an important goal for the organisation to ensure that our competitions are managed to the highest standards. Also, a number of our officials have been chosen to officiate at the European/World level and the organisation will continue to support this process.



Athlete Welfare

Safety of our athletes has been and will continue to be a primary concern for the organisation. Athletics Ireland is committed to placing our children's safety and our athlete's health at the forefront of our strategic plan. We can be pleased with efforts in this regard already as the following table highlights. With continued co-operation focus from clubs and their Child Welfare Officers, we are confident that we will progress in this area.

Table 3: Number of responsible members Gardaí vetted and trained in code of ethics

| Year | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|---|----------|-------------|-------------|
| Number Garda Vetted | 0 | 2620 | 3253 |
| Number Trained in Code of Ethics | 0 | 468 | 799 |



portsfile 7 July 2013; Cian Mc Phillips, Longford A.C., on his way to winning Boy's U12 600m event, Woodie's DIY National Juvenile Track and Field Championships, Tullamore Harriers, Tullamore, Co. Offaly. Picture credit: Tomas Greally / SPORTSFILE

High Performance

During 2013, Athletics Ireland has published the organisation's High Performance Plan. The document represents a pathway to success in the next Olympic cycle and beyond and has detailed plans, ambitions and targets. This already published High Performance Plan is a key element of this Strategic Plan.

The High Performance Plan focuses on creating systems within a defined process which maximizes our potential to produce medal winning opportunities for Ireland in major championships.

The High Performance Plan is an essential part of our investment in the athletics potential which exists in Ireland. While the systems are coming on stream and many of the outcomes will take a number of years to materialise, the measured and evidence based model now in place will pay dividends in terms of future international success.



The Mission of Athletics Ireland

Athletics Ireland has a mission to support and develop the athletes of Ireland of all ages, disciplines and abilities.

Vision of Athletics Ireland

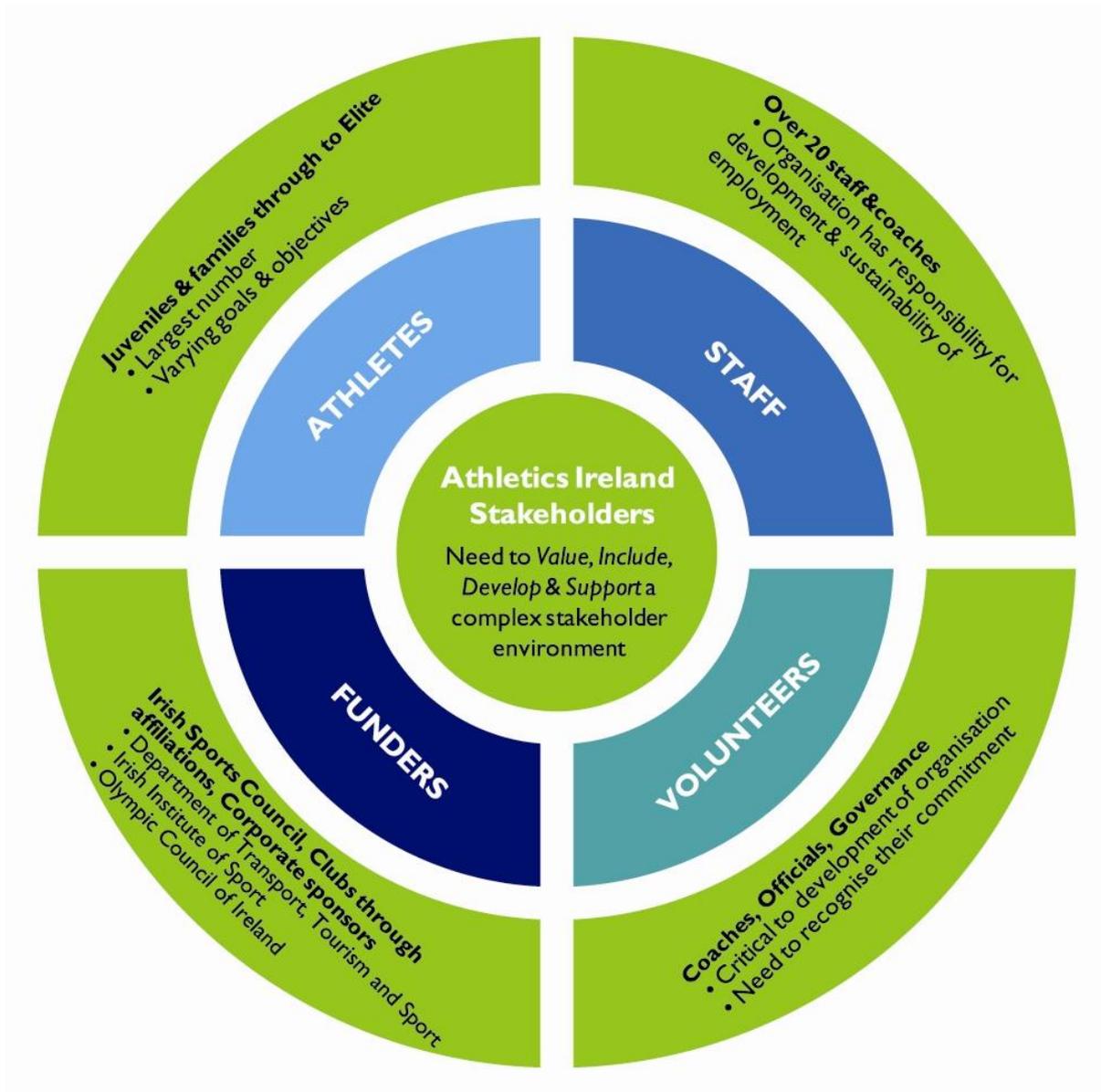
Athletics Ireland is an athlete-centered organisation, committed to the promotion in Ireland of all forms of athletics, from track and field, through cross-country and road running, mountain running, ultra-running and mass participation events, at all levels and ages, including under-age, senior and master, with athlete welfare as a primary concern. It has a commitment to enhancing its coaching structure to support athletes of all abilities, with a particular emphasis on the elite / high performance level and to ensuring that its administrative structures are efficient, responsive to its members and managed in line with the best principles of good governance.

Underlying this vision is a set of values which include;

1. **Being Athlete Centered**– from our youngest to oldest, from those who show athletic promise to those already competing internationally and those who join recreationally
2. **Being Transparent and Responsible** – in our Governance, our Coaching and our Competition and in our promotion of athlete Safety and Welfare
3. **Being Visionary** in the development of partnerships, in educational and health programmes, showing leadership in our sport in and in society



STAKEHOLDERS' Support



Strategic Priorities 2013-2016

In this plan, Athletics Ireland has identified seven key strategic priorities for the period 2013 to 2016.

These are:

1. To promote the growth of the sport of athletics, health and fitness generally among our members.
2. To support the achievements of our elite athletes, in particular by implementing the High Performance Plan already published.
3. To build on the existing base of Coaches and Officials.
4. To promote the sport of athletics among Juveniles and Schools.
5. To promote health and fitness in the population as a whole.
6. To further develop the supporting infrastructure.
7. To ensure good governance and financial stability.

Specific objectives are outlined in each of these priority areas and a pathway outlined to their delivery by 2016.



1. Supporting the growth of the sport

a. By 2016 we will have 60,000 members.

We will achieve this by:

- Supporting clubs in their membership drives through partnering with them on coaching and volunteer recruitment.
- Identifying areas for potential to form new clubs with particular focus on inner-city areas where we have very little penetration.
- Creation of mass-participation events and targeting these participants to join clubs.
- Allocating Capital resources to assist clubs in procuring the appropriate equipment (Hurdles, etc).
- Focusing on retention of our members by
 - Delivering a quality club experience by establishing a club best standard.
 - By ensuring we deliver a competition environment which is continually monitored and reviewed and meets the needs of our members.
 - Minimising the loss of membership at key transitional life stages.
- Tapping into the lapsed athletic community to re-engage with the sport.
- Maximising the window of opportunity to engage children aged 6-10 in the sport before their free time is consumed by other sports and activities.
- Ensuring that the sport receives maximum positive media exposure.

b. Ensuring the organisation is member-centred.

We will achieve this by:

- The Board, committees and staff focusing on ensuring that proper governance is in place throughout the National organisation, ensuring that the interest of the membership the priority.
- Communicating to our members on an on-going basis through our web-site, Irish Runner Magazine, Fit Magazine and through generation of positive P.R events.
- Putting in place a process through “Club Mark” whereby we can assist clubs to run their affairs ensuring that appropriate Governance is in place.

c. *Increasing emphasis on partnership with corporate and charity groups to manage recreation running.*

This will be achieved by:

- Continuing the work started in 2011 – 2012 in focusing on mass-participation events as a means of generating revenue.
- Co-operation with statutory bodies ensuring that standards are adhered to nation-wide in the interest of health and safety of participants.
- Implementing a Governance structure whereby Athletics Ireland is the authority in all aspects of Road-Running and that this is monitored and evaluated on a continuous basis.

2. Supporting High Performance

a. Plan a coaching, financial support and administrative strategy for European and World events to 2016.

We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring leadership and management structures, support systems and processes, supervision of resources with our stakeholders.
- Promoting a culture and a High Performance environment that is well integrated through systems and structures, people, resources, facilities and policies.
- Providing a World Class approach to identify and develop talented athletes capable of winning at the highest level in their event discipline. Focus will be on winning medals and reaching finals on major competitions.
- Attracting, developing, retaining and supporting coaches to deliver on our vision and medal outcomes.
- Identifying the competition pathways that lead to delivery of our performance goals and support those through championship team support.
- Delivering a World-Class performance service programme that is structured, organised, fully integrated and communicated.
- Ensuring that High Performance has depth through athlete development programmes, development squads and Youth/Junior international teams.

b. Develop, support and fund a High Performance Team.

We will achieve this by:

- Complementing the existing structure of a Director of High Performance Services Manager, Teams Manager, Endurance Coach and part-time medical staff with additional coaches (mix of full-time and part-time) and a Junior High Performance Manager.

c. Set out realistic targets for high performance through 2016.

We will achieve this by:

- Reaching European, World and Olympic Finals is a priority.
- Targeting 24 Medal opportunities across Junior, University Games, Under 23 and Senior



3. *Coaching and Official Development*

a. Put in place Coaching Structures.

We will achieve this by:

- Appointing of full-time coaches in the High Performance structure in all disciplines working with volunteer coaches to guide them in their development needs. Progress has already been made on coaching structure in 2012 through the appointment of an Endurance Coach.

b. Continuing to increase the numbers of coaches at all levels by 20%.

We will achieve this by:

- Working with Coaching Ireland, through our Coaching/Regional Development Officer structure by identifying gaps and in all disciplines and filling these gaps
- Holding Coaching seminars, using international speakers to motivate aspiring coaches to both continue and upgrade their skills base.

c. Qualify more officials at National and International Level.

We will achieve this by:

- Continuing to train national officials ensuring that there is competency in all areas.
- Working from the 2013 base of 4 International officials to increase to 7 by 2016.



4. Developing Juvenile and Schools Athletics

a. Encourage participation through volunteer & Club base.

We will achieve this by:

- Through the RDO and School structures continuing to encourage participation of young people.
- Through our marketing structure telling the positives of our sport to cater for all ages and abilities.
- Continuing to recruit parents and teachers and provide coaching development to both.
- Endeavouring to influence policy making regarding the PE & extra curriculum in schools
- Developing Active Schools network to build bridge between schools and sport clubs
- Becoming involved in Active Schools Week and Active Schools Flags
- Developing a nationwide Athletics Summer Camps to allow children to have the opportunity to try athletics

b. Focus on talent identification.

We will achieve this by:

- Providing an environment whereby Juvenile Clubs/Schools work closely with the High Performance unit in identifying talent.
- Focussing on individual disciplines to ensure that we can attract a wider pool of athletes in Throws, Walks and Jumps.
- Creating an environment that Juvenile Clubs and Schools are co-ordinated to ensure the appropriate development of athletes.
- Creating a structure whereby coaches and mentors are experienced in the area of injury awareness/detection.

c. Upgrade coaching to cater for all grades.

We will achieve this by:

- Providing coaching courses at Level 0, 1, 2 and 3 and encourage club volunteers, parents and teachers to embrace continuous development.
- Continuing to ensure that club coaches provide support to schools including mentoring of teachers to develop coaching skills.



5. The promotion of health and fitness

We will achieve this by:

- a. Further developing the Fit4Life and Fit4Life for Youth programmes.
- b. Exploring the potential of working with Government Departments and other sports organisations to promote health and fitness, particularly among youth.

6. Enhancing supporting Infrastructure

(Welfare, Administrative, Technology)

a. Child Welfare procedures, Code of Ethics Training.

We will achieve this by:

- Continuing the vetting process which was initiated in 2010 ensuring that all coaches and officials who are in contact with children are Garda Vetted.
- Ensuring that the process to handle reported incidences continues to work quickly and efficiently.
- Continuing to educate clubs, counties and regions on Child Welfare and ethical behaviour through our “Code of Ethics” courses.

b. Mental Health support.

We will achieve this by:

- Working with the HSE and Samaritans educate our coaches and officials on issues of mental health to ensure that signs of potential problems in our athletes are recognised and appropriate action taken.

c. Upgrade systems of administrative support for events.

We will achieve this by:

- Embracing the on-line entry and Meet Manager systems to ensure officiating in managing of regional and national events.

d. Information System

We will achieve this by:

- Developing of fully integrated and automated database management system for our members etc. and participants in our road races. This will allow key data to be captured and analysed and for effective direct marketing communications.

7. Ensuring Good Governance & Financial Stability

a. Training of Board & Committee members on excellence in governance.

We will achieve this by:

- Implementing a systematic process through the Finance & Risk Committee for the training of the Board and Committees in the area of Governance.
- Ensuring that the Board and Committees are aware of and equipped to deal with risk issues facing the organisation.
- Appointing co-opted members to the Board and Committees based on their expertise in the specific area and their knowledge of governance issues.

b. Focus on financial security.

We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring that proper financial management is at the centre of everything we do through:
 - Preparation of a detailed annual budget by management and approval by the relevant committee, The Finance & Risk Committee and the Board.
 - Managing of the business through analysis of monthly accounts and approved procedures on spend.
 - Ensuring that proper controls are in place on Capital spending to ensure adherence to the requirements of the Department of Sport.
 - Continue targeting of new revenue streams via enhancement of sponsorship portfolio and innovation in fundraising events.

