

I'd like to thank everyone for attending today you are all most welcome.

It's great to see and meet everyone in person, this time last year we were slowly coming out of the pandemic and the meeting was held virtually.

Just reflecting for a moment on that time one year ago, we were coming out of the freezer, the sport had just restarted, and we were looking forward to a new season and planning for the future again. Its hard to comprehend now, but something I feel we must remind ourselves that the lockdown completely disrupted 2 years of our sport in Ireland. It wasn't quite clear to us how much damage had been done. Schools had not played indoor sports not just handball, how were we going to restart everything, all of our connections were down, all was quiet and

I'm pleased to report that things have started to recover, schools are back playing handball, our leagues are back and hopefully growing somewhat. Access to halls is again problematic and expensive for some of our clubs

My main focus for the meeting today is to discuss the future of our sport and in that regard a major initiative we launched in March/April this year to promote Handball in Ireland. We appointed Brand Consultants Image Now to carry out an extensive review of handball in Ireland, how it is perceived by those in the sport and those outside and to come up recommendations on how the sport should be promoted.

We will walk you through a presentation we gave to Sport Ireland in August this year

(in terms of handball rankings) including Malta and Great Britain for example. This has enabled me to represent our case for additional support both through investment and improved competitions.

I would like to record my own thanks to my colleagues on the board. We have some good people leaving us this year, but the work of the board continues and we continue to be interested in expanding our team to include areas we don't currently have expertise in.

Eoin our Colleague for over 6 years now is stepping down this year. I'd like to record my fulsome thanks to Eoin for his contribution at every level throughout his term. His time has helped to strengthen our Governance and improve the processes and procedures by which the sport itself in Ireland is operated. This has significantly helped to reduce risk for volunteers and participants making the sport more viable and easier to participate in. Internationally Eoin has contributed to the EHF Board of Arbitration and working on a number of successful motions to both EHF & IHF Congress over the years.

I'm delighted to say he will continue through his involvement in the new Governance Audit and Risk Committee.

Darren has to step back due to ill health and we wish him all the best for the future. Darren helped this Association through a difficult period financially in the 2015-16 period and his contribution in the subsequent years enables the IOHA to get back to a financially sound condition. Thank you, Darren and all the best for the future.

This is very welcome news indeed and I'm delighted that additional funding for projects in Ireland will now be available. The funding will be available for several different types of initiatives for national

federations including extended SMART programmes, but also research and development, marketing, business and commercial projects to develop sponsorship.

Its important to say that although the EHF are supporting us, we need to define and run the project or projects and commit to delivering on the goals we outline as part of that. This opens the door to professional support as well as funding. The first projects are likely to be announced by February and the EHF are throwing the door open to us for proposals.

### **Board and Governance**

Once more I truly thank my colleagues on the Board for their strong commitment and staying power throughout this last frustrating year.

- Michael Moloney - Hon Secretary
- Andrea Ongaro – Board Member Head of Coaching
- Darren Connolly – Treasurer, Darren is Managing Partner of BCK
- Eoin Gallagher – Board Member, Barrister who now sits on the EHF Court of Arbitration
- Peter Caulfield – Board Member & former EHF Delegate
- Linda Harney – Board member and member of the GAR

### **Staff**

I would like to record my thanks to the Management and staff of the Association – Joao, Caroline and our newest staff member Eugene McKenna.

Well done to Joao for identifying the potential for funding for the North of Ireland and I'm delighted to say we are hoping for some good development here given Eugene's appointment.

The good news is that the EHF have this weekend at their 30<sup>th</sup> Year Extraordinary Congress announced additional funding for development **in the order of €6M**. This for development of the Grassroots game through a new initiative **EHF 360**.

The guys are busy which is good, and exactly what we hoped for. There are some good levels of engagement and they are developing their briefs to match the sports strategy.

### **Image Now**

I would again like to say thanks to IN. The guys went well beyond their brief and the funding available to help develop our new initiatives and help shape the direction of the sport for years to come. I don't think they would mind me mentioning Holly in particular who has worked so hard to get some practical benefits working on the ground on social media and communications generally. I think this is already paying off.

I know there will be additional details from other reports but from my perspective we are in a good place to get the sport moving again. Thank you all very much for your efforts this year, thanks to you the sport is now in a better position financially and organisationally to get

Best of luck in 2022/23

Fintan J Lyons  
President IOHA