

Chairperson's Report to AGM

Let us reflect on where we now stand as a Club. The 2022 AGM expressed excitement and curiosity about what might be possible. Things have moved on since then and of course we have had challenges and successes – like any Club. We also expect more of ourselves and we think you'll agree that we have made improvements to standards across the board.

Looking back at our initial objectives – they were

- Increasing participation in sea swimming as a healthy and enjoyable recreation
- Helping members to improve their skill level – from whatever it is now to their own personal goal – contributing to more enjoyment
- Lobby and work with partners to improve the infrastructure around sea swimming in Dunmore East

All these objectives still hold relevance and indeed we are satisfied to carry them forward with those broad targets. There is endless scope within each for more achievement. So – on we go!

A brief run down on progress from the early days. Our message to Swim Ireland when we set up that we had the potential to have 40 members! We had 132 at the close of the season on September 1, 2025! Each year we find that the rush to sign up starts when the clocks go forward in April (when, in fact, it is colder than November!)

At the AGM we will give you our analysis of those things that emerged as important from the survey we did earlier this year

Who are our members?

Anyone over 18 can sign up to membership. Our special rate for those over 65 has meant that age is not a barrier and a substantial cohort of energetic seniors are regular swimmers.

So what makes people sign up to membership? Some simply love to go in the sea – they say it makes a difference to how they feel – they care little about technique, or distance – often they are daily swimmers. Generally they love the social interaction.

For those members who enjoy sea swimming and have goals to improve their technique and stamina, there is excellent opportunity to join with like-minded and similar level swimmers at Saturday Members' Time. Also from time to time there are special workshops and pool classes. Our classes have benefitted beginners, improvers and advanced.

Then there are those members who place great value in the development of the infrastructure to support swimming – such as the rail at Lawlors slip and the foot tap. They also make their voice heard about the pollution levels in the stream at Lawlors and the need to prioritise health over all other considerations. A solution to this problem is

now being planned by the Council – we say it's a priority. Fixing it can lead to other positives such as getting back the Blue Flag that Lawlors lost in 2022.

We have quite a way to go on infrastructure but we do have plans and in recent developments DESC is proud to be a part of the Dunmore East Development Group which brings together many local interests across community, sports, tourism and business as well as the hopes and needs of residents.

Others that join DESC are happy in the knowledge that their membership contributes to a community initiative that benefits swimmers and those visiting Dunmore East; Some of our members don't even swim! But – they support the community spirit of the Club and join us for social events when they are certain they won't get wet!

Safety is key when it comes to sea swimming. In the Summer months we ensure that our distance swimmers are accompanied by a Lifeguard. Unfortunately this is not possible in the winter season and we do our best to ensure that everyone is aware of potential hazards both as a result of cold water exposure and the unpredictability of the sea. Sea swimming is a recreation that always requires management of personal risk.

We make sure to keep safety at the top of our agenda – hence our regular “call to safety at sea attention” and we encourage all swimmers to make sure they live the message when in the sea..

So, enough about our progress and those things that are achieved. What next?

When it comes to challenges - our greatest is the lack of volunteers! The management of the Club requires a lot more than making hot chocolate! Members of the Committee hold things together. As a fully affiliated Club we are required to manage corporate governance in everything. While guided by Swim Ireland – we are accountable for the proper operation of a fully affiliated sports club – a status that benefits us. We also spend considerable time working with the key partners locally and nationally- assisting in agenda setting and supporting county wide outdoor recreation strategies.

You will see committee changes over the coming months. We are delighted to welcome new members and introduce them at the AGM. We will also be losing others who have played a big part in Club officer roles, including Chair, Secretary and Events coordinator. That leaves you with some real talent to continue the Club – but they need more support and the coming months will see them working to make this happen and crossing over the many roles that are part of managing DESC.

For my part I recommend my committee colleagues as a fantastic group with excellent individual skills who work really hard to keep us afloat. Relationships are excellent and we have the basis of a continuously successful Club.

See you soon at Saturday Members' Time and the Big Breakfast on Saturday December 13th.

Mary Dorgan
Outgoing Chairperson