

STRATEGIC PILLAR 4

INSPIRING COMMUNITIES



DARE TO BELIEVE

During 2025 the 'Dare to Believe' Olympic Schools Programme engaged with 119,604 students in 3,600 schools in 29 counties. These initiatives were:



The Schools Core Programme remains the cornerstone of the Dare to Believe initiative which aims to inspire and increase youth participation in sports by maximising our Olympic and Paralympic athletes' roles as Ambassadors. In 2025, this programme ran over two school terms, January to June and September through December, and reached over 29,342 students including 102 Olympic Ambassador visits to both primary and secondary schools in 27 counties around the country.

Since the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, we have welcomed 23 new Olympians from nine different sports as Ambassadors, among them double gold medallist Fintan McCarthy and fellow rower, Daire Lynch, a Paris bronze medallist. A total of 44 ambassadors - 22 female, 22 male - covering 15 sports, and featuring three Olympic Champions, three Olympic Bronze Medallists, one Paralympic Bronze Medallist, as well as a variety of World and European Champions, now make up the roster.

In preparation for the Olympic Ambassador visits there is dynamic interdisciplinary Olympic Values core curricula available for both primary schools children (aged approximately 10-12 years) and post-primary students (aged approximately 15-16 years old) to work through. The ambassadors then visit schools to give assemblies and presentations where they share their own individual Olympic journey stories of dedication, resilience and determination and engage the students in sports specific and Olympic themed games.

In 2024, we had revamped our primary curriculum taking it completely online and available to all schools. The new curriculum includes six lessons on Olympic values with presentations, activities, quizzes and movement breaks. Irish primary curriculum strands and units have been identified for each lesson, and all lessons were co-created with teachers.

Our Olympians LIVE! Event held in March, was well received by over 27,000 students who tuned in. The highlight was a fun and engaging dance lesson by Olympic Champion Rhys McClenaghan and his RTE 'Dancing With The Stars' dance partner - professional dancer Laura Nolan.

The Dare to Believe 'PEXpo' sponsored by Allianz, was held in April in the Sport Ireland National Indoor arena. This is a national Physical Education project competition and innovative sports experience for secondary schools, and 2025 was bigger and better than ever before. Over 2,000 students were in attendance and there was a record number of 275 projects on display. The students were able to try their hand at 27 different sports and also listen to talks by Paris bronze medallist rower Philip Doyle and Paralympic sprinter Orla Comerford as well as an inspiring keynote address by double Olympic Champion Kellie Harrington. Budget constraints meant we had to end our engagement with PEXpo in 2026 and we thank the PEXpo for allowing us to play a role in its growth over recent years.



In November, we released a new series of our hugely popular ‘Olympic Movement Breaks’. These are a fun and functional series of 10 ‘active break’ videos designed for use by primary schools. Delivered through short five minute videos, over 72,000 students were introduced to Team Ireland Olympians, Paralympians, and High Performance athletes, and are taught fundamental movement skills. The series culminated in a dance video of the Dare to Believe song which has become our anthem, starring nine Olympians showcasing the movement skills.

In November we announced the official release of our Dare to Believe anthem song referenced above. This was created in collaboration with the popular ‘Kabin Crew’ rappers, based in Cork. The upbeat track is available to stream on major platforms.

The increase in online engagement and activity around the Dare to Believe programme saw the launch a dedicated Instagram account during the year. Schools can now share and tag activities and visits and learn about the programme and activities.



COMMUNICATIONS

Communications is a significant focus for the Olympic Federation of Ireland (OFI) and 2025 was a year defined by momentum, growth, and strategic delivery across multiple major milestones. Building on the success of the Paris Olympic cycle and our 2024 Centenary celebration, Team Ireland continued to strengthen its digital presence and elevate athlete-centred storytelling.

Our “always on” digital strategy was a core focus during the year. This ensured consistent visibility for Team Ireland athletes and programmes and included trend-aligned content and strong visual storytelling work with a focus on the amplification of the stories of the athletes within our National Federations network as well as highlighting the programmes and offerings of all OFI stakeholders.

With respect to Games events, the Communications team delivered a comprehensive programme around the Winter Olympic Games in Milano Cortina in 2026, as well as for the two European Youth Olympic Festivals held during 2025. Our focus now switches to the future and specifically the Los Angeles (LA) 2028 Olympic Games.

Internal engagement, public affairs activity, and collaboration with our National Federations all expanded meaningfully in 2025, and a keen focus was on supporting the OFI’s new philanthropic strategy. The report below highlights this in more detail.

National Federations Communications Network

Our ‘National Federations Communications Network’ remains a key element of Team Ireland’s media engagement strategy, and ensures a coordinated approach to promoting sporting activity across all Members.

10 media briefings were hosted throughout 2025. These achieved two objectives: a) to provide the media with updates on key upcoming events, including athlete and performance insights, and b) to facilitate athlete availability for interviews to improve coverage and strengthen relationships between sport and media.

35 athletes and high-performance staff participated in interviews, representing a broad range of Olympic sports. This consistent access supported sustained media coverage and reinforced the Network’s role as a trusted source of high-performance information.

Media training was embedded in the Network’s support structure, with tailored sessions delivered to Winter Olympic hopefuls, as well as younger athletes.





Milano Cortina 2026

The Winter Olympic Games, held in Milano Cortina in February 2026, was a major focus for the OFI’s Communications team over the past 12 months. Activity in that regard intensified in the months leading up to the Games and culminated in a comprehensive Games-time programme. With the final team of athletes named just days before the event, and a Games hosted across multiple regions, the challenge was to gather and present engaging content promptly for the Irish sporting public.

In the lead-up to the Games, Winter sports were integrated across our Communications strands, starting with a ‘one-year-to-go’ milestone in February 2025. Newsletters, media briefings, and social channels highlighted athletes, key milestones, and qualification events provided further coverage throughout the cycle.

A Team Day in May 2025 and a visit to the halfpipe in Austria supported athlete promotion in advance of team selection. Following the athletes’ nominations, core content gathering and amplification took place over the ten days prior to the Opening Ceremony, with the official Team Ireland Camp in Bolzano serving as a central content hub.

Key pre-competition outputs included:

- ▶ Media guidelines booklet
- ▶ Rights-free photography
- ▶ Broadcast footage and video content
- ▶ Team announcement and Allianz flagbearer announcement
- ▶ Kit launch
- ▶ Broadcast schedule

Boosting national engagement, journalist Eamon Horan travelled to Cortina for a week in early February 2026. Eamon performed pre-competition interviews and helped build public interest.

Once the Games were underway, our content strategy combined timely updates with engaging athlete-led storytelling. Daily schedules and competition round-ups were supported by a mix of owned photography, as well as RTÉ collaboration, and the procurement of imagery from the ANOC photo programme with Getty. IOC Olympic Channel widgets were again integrated into our website, Olympics.ie, to support live content delivery and the website was given an overhaul to provide better Winter Games related content for users.

Sinéad O’Carroll attended the Games in a dual role as NOC media support and journalist, contributing on-site coverage and amplifying athlete and Games storytelling across external outlets including The42.ie, RTÉ, Virgin Media and Newstalk.

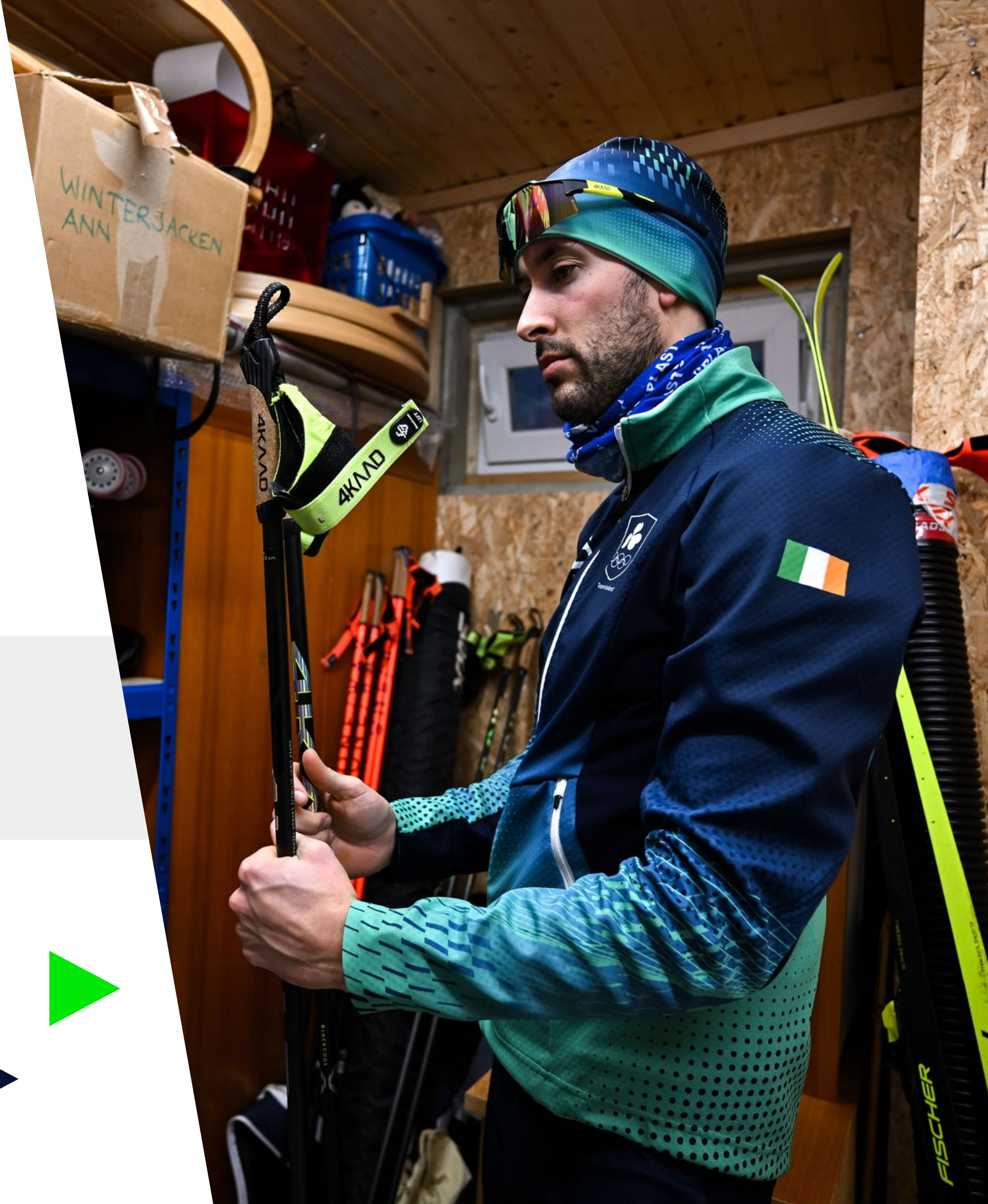
Team Ireland channels reported increased activity when compared to previous Winter Games editions.

6.2m
combined reach

5.5k
new TikTok followers

56k
new users on Olympics.ie

The Team Ireland homecoming, hosted by the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, drew extensive national media coverage and highlighted the achievements of the Team as well as the ever-increasing profile of Winter sports in Ireland.



Los Angeles 2026

As qualification pathways for many sports begin in 2026, our Games Communication focus has now shifted fully to Los Angeles 2028. The media accreditation process begins in autumn 2026, and representatives will be attending the World Press Briefing in July this year.

Preparations are also being supported through ongoing promotion of the LA Games. This includes early messaging around the recently announced Team Ireland House in Long Beach, as well as the initial ticket purchasing phases. Activity will grow over the coming months, with an increased emphasis on storytelling, media briefings, and digital content.

Youth Events

Telling the stories of young Irish athletes is always a priority of the OFI, and once again in 2025 there was strong engagement with both the Summer and Winter editions of the European Youth Olympic Festivals. This will continue this year as we move towards the World Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, Senegal in October and November.

A dedicated team day for EYOF Winter and Summer focused on content capture to support local engagement, sponsor deliverables, and the development of athletes' media readiness for senior competition. This included team talks from Irish Olympians, with Dean Clancy addressing winter athletes and Ellen Walsh their summer counterparts.

In-Games, activity centred on daily schedules and live updates. In Skopje, photographer Tyler Miller captured competition imagery. Both events delivered strong local media coverage and pleasing digital engagement.

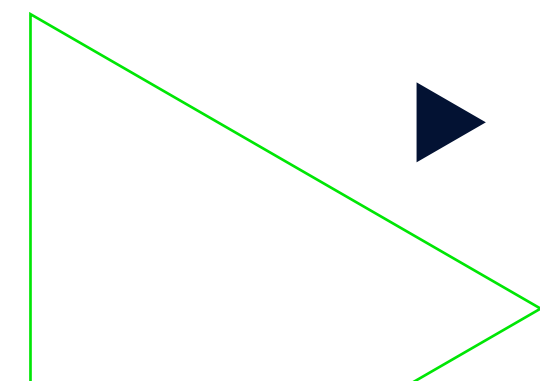
Legacy and Storytelling

Legacy storytelling continued to resonate strongly with audiences throughout 2025 and beyond, following the strong engagement enjoyed the year before. Several standout activations took place:

- ▶ **International Women's Day:** A documentary style video featuring Sonia O'Sullivan was produced for International Women's Day.
- ▶ **Ronnie Delany:** Following the passing of Ronnie Delany, a short video was created to commemorate his famous Olympic race which included commentary from him recorded in recent years.
- ▶ **Maeve Kyle:** Ireland's first female athletics Olympian was celebrated following her passing earlier this year and honoured posthumously with a President's Award at the Olympic Sports Award, including a citation from IOC President, Kirsty Coventry.
- ▶ **Ongoing Legacy Content:** As well as a concerted focus from the Irish Olympians Association to complete the Irish Olympic athlete bios on our website, web and social media content continuously highlighted throwbacks, athlete features, and historical events.

Public Affairs and Philanthropy

A key priority in 2026 and beyond is the development of a comprehensive Public Affairs strategy, alongside the advancement of our philanthropic programme. These aim to help ensure Irish athletes are fully supported to perform at their best at future Games events.



Other Activations and Strategic Communications

Team Ireland Newsletter

The Team Ireland Newsletter was reintroduced in 2025 with a refreshed editorial approach centred on a monthly feature story, key updates across Olympic sports as well as on upcoming events. Featured athletes included Sarah Healy, Eve McMahon, Darren Rafferty, Konan Pazzia, Mark English, Fiona Murtagh, Aoife O'Rourke, Ben Lynch, Thomas Maloney Westgard, Aifric Keogh, Mona McSharry and Sarah Hawkshaw.

Owned Events

Support for a wide range of internal engagements for sponsors, athletes and key stakeholders was delivered during the year. These included our Team Ireland Fittest Sponsor event, our annual Golf Day, an Irish Olympians Association Barbeque as well as various Members' events and meetings. Particular emphasis was placed on the first Olympic Sport Awards, launched in 2025, which from a media perspective included a partnership with radio broadcaster 'Off the Ball', who helped to establish the event as a key moment in the sporting calendar.

Dare to Believe Schools Programme, sponsored by Allianz

Our 'Dare to Believe' schools programme continues to be a much-celebrated initiative of the OFI. Sponsored by Allianz since 2025, Communications support for the programme has amplified over the past year through the development of a Dare to Believe Instagram account, which has ensured greater coverage. 2025's spotlight schools visits, Olympic Movement Breaks, Olympians Live broadcasts and our partnership with PEXpo were promoted.

Branching out into community events, the programme also supported a visit of Sonia O'Sullivan to the Westport Athletics club in April 2026, which saw 500 children take part in a mass participation sports day on their newly opened track.

Flogas Performance Fund

A Performance Series spotlighted, every month, recipients of the Flogas €75,000 Performance Fund. This series highlighted projects involving altitude training, coaching development, equipment optimisation, youth pathway development, and performance support.

